

LIVING TRADITIONS  
TRIBAL AND FOLK  
PAINTINGS OF INDIA



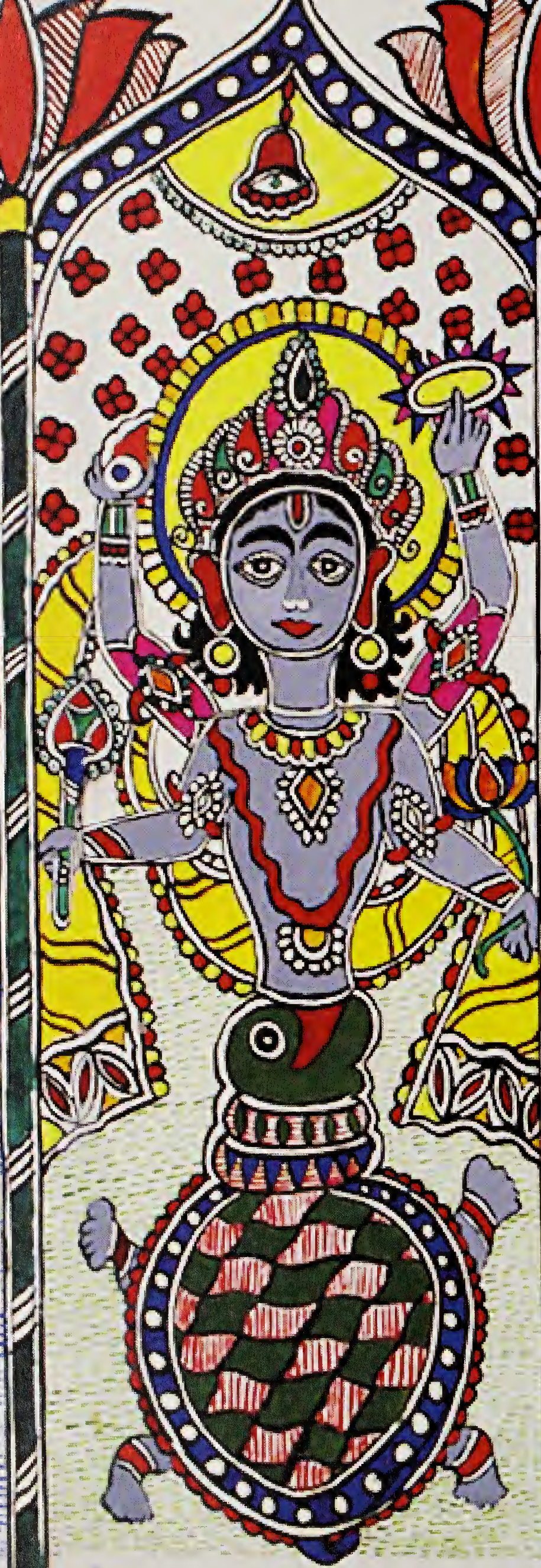
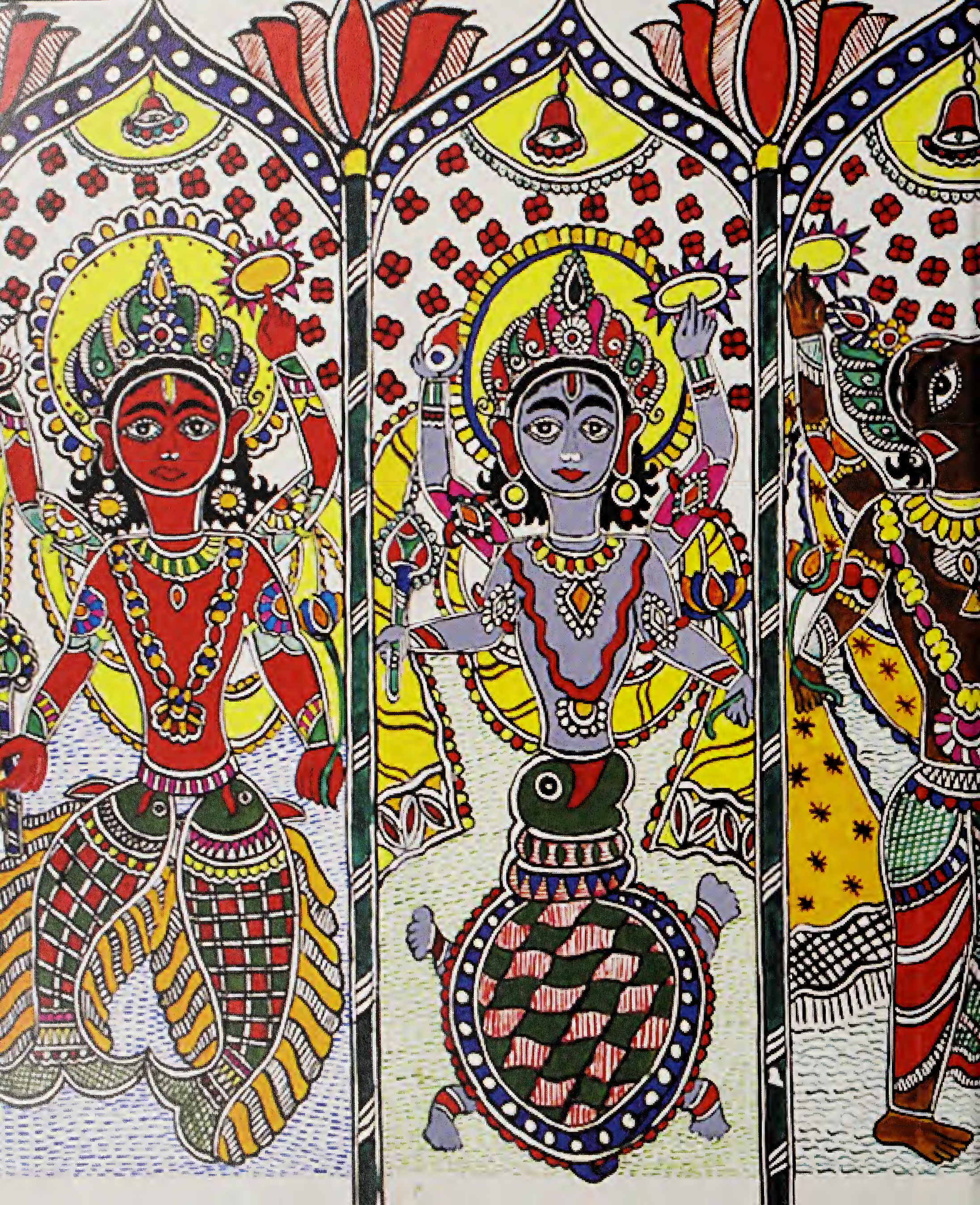










Figure 1.1  
Madhubani painting, Bihar  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



**LIVING TRADITIONS**  
**Tribal and Folk Paintings**  
**of India**



**Centre for Cultural Resources and Training**  
Ministry of Culture, Government of India  
New Delhi





## **CENTRE FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES AND TRAINING**

Ministry of Culture, Government of India

New Delhi

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Figure 1.2  
Mata-ni-pachedi painting, Gujarat  
Source: Craft Revival Trust, New Delhi



# Acknowledgement

Millions of practising artists in our country form a huge and important resource of traditional knowledge and indigenous technologies. Respect for the artist and for his/her inherent creative skills is the integral aim of this publication. The CCRT dedicates this publication to the creativity of the unnumbered, anonymous artists of our land.

India is a mosaic of immense diversity encompassing a wide variety of cultural communities. People belonging to different social groups and different regions have expressed their beliefs and aspirations in a straight forward and simplistic manner through a rich and variegated repository of paintings. The influence of local history, geographic conditions, flora, fauna, cultural moorings and rituals is discernible in their work. Almost every state and agricultural and tribal community of India has its distinct painting style, and some have more than one. Differences occur even as one goes from one village to another. Their deep connection with their surroundings and their spiritual association with all manifestations of nature has shaped their work. The myths and legends associated with these paintings establish the identity of the tribe. All these features point towards the rich and varied traditions in our country. In this book we look at few of these living traditions to encourage the reader to explore and discover any similar living traditions that exist in his/her village, city or neighbourhood.

The CCRT has used information provided in the records available with government institutions and other authentic sources to make this publication as informative as possible. Numerous people and organisations have helped in the production of this publication and CCRT would like to express gratitude to all of them. Exploring living traditions and its various facets was a challenging task and valuable inputs and guidance provided by Shri Mushtak Khan served as a beacon for CCRT. Our sincere thanks to Smt. Ira Pande, an eminent writer and editor associated with renowned publishers, for help in editing. Any amendment/addition to the content of this publication is most welcome from our readers.

By bringing alive the everyday life of past centuries and communities these paintings also help us in understanding our origins. This publication is intended to instil artistic consciousness in the minds of the people and help them understand the aesthetic vision of the folk and tribal forms. These artistic expressions, not bound by any guidelines, emanate a tremendous vitality, spontaneity and freedom of expression-reflecting the collective consciousness of the people. With the spread of globalization and “shrinking of the world”, we are losing sight of traditional way of life and much of the beauty and creativity that accompanied it. May I end this with the dictum of Ruskin that *“industry without art is brutality”*.

G.C. Joshi  
Director, CCRT



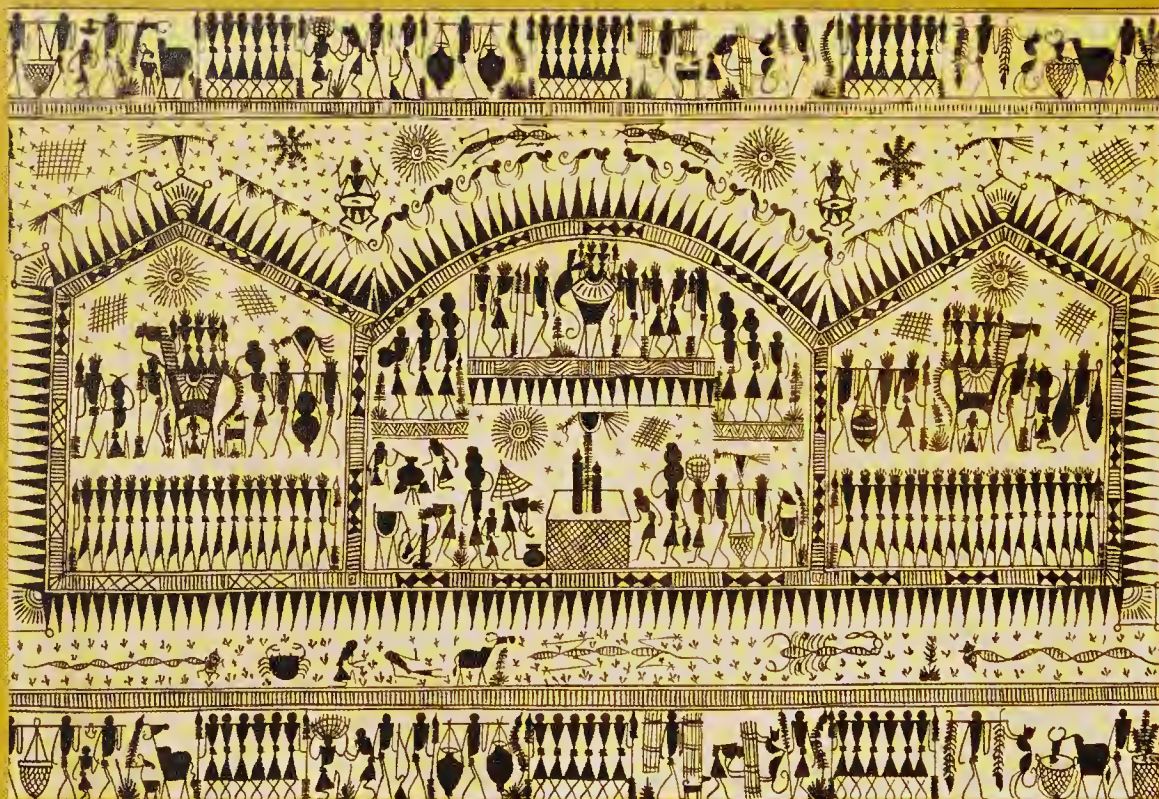


Figure 1.4  
Saura Painting, Odisha, Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Figure 1.6  
Gond Painting, Madhya Pradesh, Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



# Foreword

India has an astonishingly rich variety of painting traditions. This publication is an attempt to create awareness about tribal and folk paintings of India and the significant role that they play in the day-to-day lives of tribal and rural people.

The Indian way of life is replete with traditions, rituals, customs, beliefs and a wide panorama of gods and goddesses. It has given birth to a rich tapestry of tribal and folk paintings. The genesis of a painting could be either religious or based on ancient folk wisdom. These art forms not only bring out the religio-aesthetic aspirations of the people, but also reflect their innate concern for their surroundings. Each painting echoes the aesthetic, cultural and spiritual sensibility of a region. We see an enormous diversity in cultural manifestation, tradition, raw material, technique and application that represents each region and district of India. The themes of these paintings remain related to nature, spirituality, local folklore and legends.

These paintings enrich the daily lives of these communities and provide livelihood for enterprising artists. Birth and death, marriage and adolescence, harvest and onset of monsoons, *poornima* (full moon) and *amavas* (new moon), gods and goddesses are the themes that find expression in this creative medium. Communal life and close proximity with neighbours and, of course, family give creative expression to the joys and sorrows of life.

The richness of India as a civilization is mirrored in these paintings that symbolise the latent artistic talent of ordinary people who have not received any formal training in this discipline. It is a spontaneous outpouring of ingenuity and self-expression. Each art form has an aura and uniqueness which imparts it an unmatched quality. In this art form we see the world from the eyes of perpetual childhood.

Wall paintings are also a part of everyday ritual and serve as a channel of telling stories or of glorifying local heroes. They embellish the walls of homes and rooms, beautify and edify exterior and interior spaces of homes in a purposeful manner. Even today there are villages in India where everybody participates in such tribal paintings and is thus an artist.

In his book, “Introduction to Indian Art”, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy says, “... *in India art was an integral quality inhering in all activities, entertained by all in their daily environment and produced by all in proportion to the vitality (not the kind) of their activity*”.

Neena Ranjan  
Chairperson, CCRT





Figure 1.7  
Cave painting, Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



# Introduction

Art is essentially an expression of human creativity – a medium to communicate emotions and feelings. It takes the form of paintings, sculpture, music, dance, literature etc. Prehistoric man painted on the walls of caves, played wind instruments, carved sculptures out of bones and danced around fire, etched figures and symbols on rock to give expression to his creativity and his daily life.

The living traditions of any country are its cultural heritage, which constantly evolves, adapts and reinvents itself. India has the largest number of art forms anywhere in the world, mainly because its cultural heritage is rich, diverse and vibrant. In this publication, we have explored tribal and folk paintings in various parts of the country as part of our living traditions since pre-historic times to now.

Tribal people live in less accessible parts of the country, not on the open plains or along the great rivers. They are bonded to each other by rituals, their special ways of celebrating ceremonies at the time of birth, marriage, and also the first haircut or the piercing of the earlobes and so on. These mark the fundamental identity of the tribe and clan. Such auspicious occasions are earmarked by tribal and folk paintings. Tribal and folk paintings are not naturalistic but pictorial graphic representations (pictorial sign or symbol) of rituals, ceremonies and daily activities.

Many other countries also have tribal and folk art being practised as a living heritage. The indigenous visual art form created by the *adivasis*, tribes and natives of India on various surfaces such as walls, floors, cloth, wood and paper are called Indian tribal painting. Tribal art is restricted to a single tribe whereas folk art may be practised by various people belonging to a large cross-section of society. The folk art of India does not belong to a particular period. It is a collective expression of rural Indian people driven by a desire to fulfil their social and emotional needs. The famous artist Henry Moore declared that “*folk art is something made by people with a direct and immediate response to life and for that matter rural art was not a matter of arithmetical calculation and academism, but a channel for expressing powerful beliefs, hopes and fears*”.





Figure 1.8  
Wall painting of Bodhisattva, Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



India has the largest concentration of tribes after Africa. 90 million people belong to the indigenous communities known as *adivasis* or tribals. There are 573 tribes in India and tribal communities comprise about 8 percent of our population. The term 'tribe' usually denotes a social group bound together by kin and duty and associated with a particular territory. Every tribe is known for its outstanding cultural traits. Tribes such as Bhils, Gonds, Murias, Sauras, Warlis and Rathwas are known for their paintings. Some of the tribal paintings are Pithora, Warli, Santhal and Saura whereas Picchvai, Mata ni pachedi, Patachitra and Phad are folk paintings.

The simplest art in any tribal society is that of wall painting. Wall paintings are called murals. The exact date of its beginning cannot be determined but they were in practice since centuries. The art of wall painting is not only an expression of creativity but it is in itself a ritual. Every year on various auspicious occasions i.e. marriage, harvesting or a festival, when the tribals repair or whitewash their surroundings (huts) they recreate a fresh design or finish the previous one with fresh colours. The hallmark of these paintings is simplicity. They depict simple beliefs of the community and provide information about myths, religious beliefs, local heroes, epics, customs and rituals. These paintings are done not with the objective of earning livelihood but to invoke the divine blessings for fertile soil, healthy offspring and protection from evil forces etc.

Early humans created painting and engravings on rock walls during the Upper Palaeolithic period (40,000 to 10,000 B.C.E.), and the best were done by what we call the Magdalenians, people who flourished in Europe from 18,000 to 10,000 B.C.E. Some of the other examples are Bhimbetka Rock Shelters in India (Figure 1.7); pre-Hispanic rock art in the Baja California Peninsula, the Sierra de San Francisco region; Kondoa Rock Art Sites in United Republic of Tanzania etc. Tadrart Acacus has thousands of cave paintings in Libya representing hunting or daily life scenes, ritual dances and animals, dating from 12,000 B.C.E. to C.E. 100.

Stories about mammals, insects, reptiles, and fish comprise a genre of animal storytelling that may well have begun during the Stone Age (40,000-10,000 B.C.E.) as can be seen in Paleolithic cave paintings. Lascaux in France is one of the most beautifully painted caves of pre-historic people, and now one of the best known. In many early



civilizations animals were revered either as sacred themselves or as gods and goddesses represented in animal forms.

French archaeologists have discovered an 11,000-year-old wall painting underground in northern Syria which they believe is the oldest in the world. The painting has been uncovered at Djade al-Mughara Neolithic site, northeast of the Syrian city of Aleppo.

In Maharashtra, the Ajanta Caves (1st century B.C.E.-late 5th century C.E.) have the earliest Buddhist rock-cut *chaityas*, sanctuaries, and *viharas*, monasteries. The caves are adorned with wall paintings that employ both earth and mineral pigments (Figure 1.8).

The rock paintings and the temple-mural tradition acquired a different dimension altogether when the medium of paintings switched over to walls of the local householders, paper and cloth. The art form reached out to the common folk and became more personal.

Most popular painting traditions originate in specific regions formed by geography and climate, these traditions are almost always shaped by distinct regional cultures. The artists and patrons of these popular painting traditions are identified with particular communities residing in specific locales. The paintings of these traditions are thus not universally produced throughout India. For example, Phad painting, which narrates the deeds of regional herogods, is practised primarily in certain villages of Rajasthan by members of the Joshi (astologer) clan of the Chhipa caste, which is traditionally involved in printing and dyeing cotton and which claims to be a sub-group of brahmins (the priestly class); Joshis make their paintings for performers-priests of different social groups, who in turn display the paintings and perform the stories. Likewise, Puri painting is carried out only in the pilgrimage town of Puri and at other sites in the state of Odisha by a painter caste known as *Chitrakars* (painters), who make religious images for devotees of Lord Jagannatha, a form of the god Vishnu.

In India the transfer of paintings from the walls of the temples to the walls of the homes of common people led by the *chitrakatha* tradition (pictorial rendering) played a significant role in propagating the epics—the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other Hindu *shastras*. Different regions in India developed such art in their own manner to spread the message of God. Some examples are Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Patua scroll paintings of West Bengal, Phad painting of Rajasthan, the



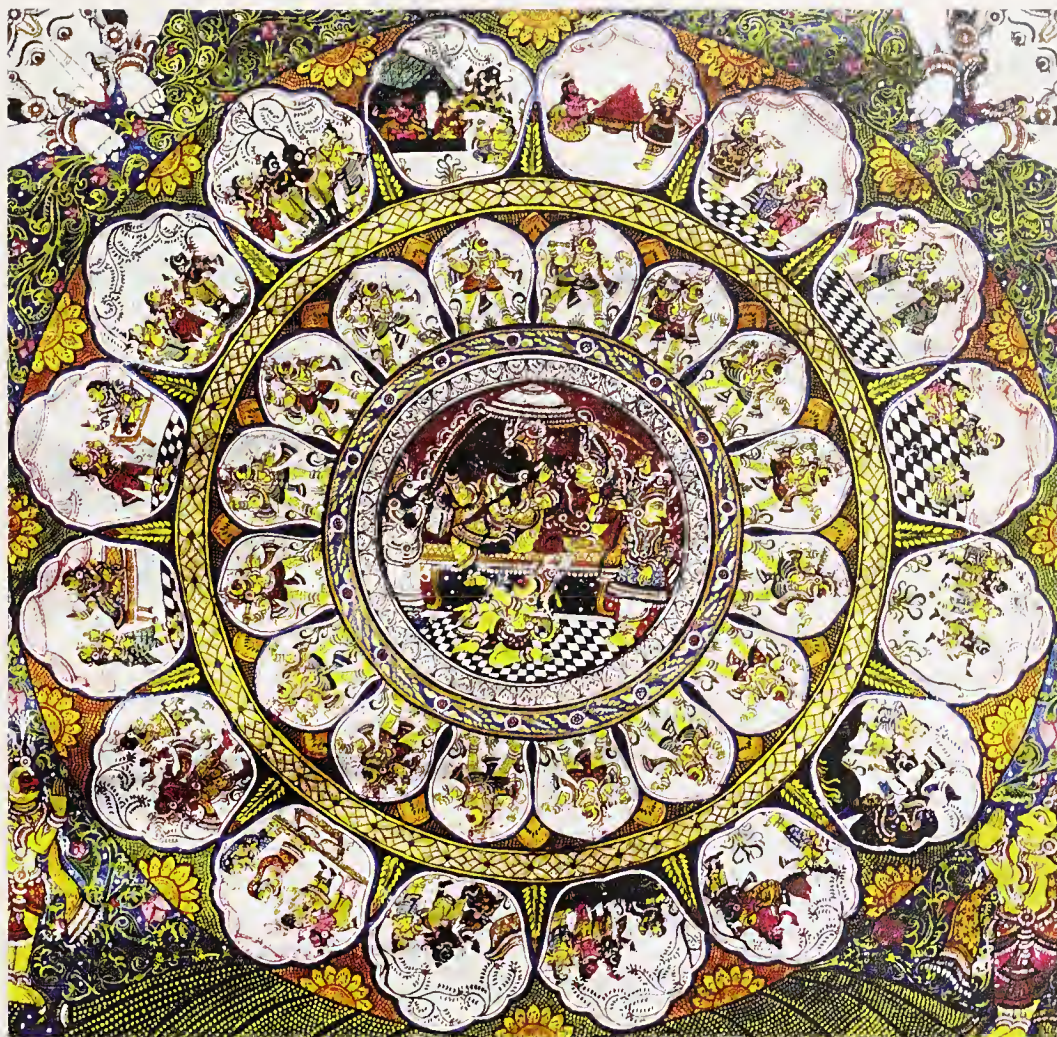


Figure 1.9  
Patachitra of Odisha  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Figure 1.10  
Warli painting, Maharashtra  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Patachitras of Odisha, Mata-ni-pachedi of Gujarat, and Nathadwara Picchvai paintings.

Each tradition is linked to a central deity or thought. Nathadwara Picchvai paintings are focussed on Lord Krishna, Patachitras of Odisha on the chief deity of Puri, Sri Jagannath with his sister Subhadhra and brother Balabhadra (Figure 1.9), Kalighat paintings on Goddess Kali. Phad painting of Rajasthan on the Pabuji, Tejaji and Ramdeo ji. Madhubani painting of Bihar is done by householders to celebrate social events like marriage, childbirth or sacred thread ceremony. The central figure of Mata-ni-pachedi paintings is Goddess Durga portrayed in various forms.

Warli Paintings of Maharashtra (Figure 1.10) are very different from other tribal and folk paintings in India but similar in many ways with the African Zulu Paintings. Their themes revolve around depiction of daily life activities rather than mythological themes. Unlike Madhubani paintings that use bright colours, these are painted on mud and cow dung based surface using earth colours or rice paste in white. Their linear nature “characterized by an emphasis on line” and use of a single colour make them similar to pre-historic cave paintings. The African Zulu Paintings portray African people doing their daily chores in thin sticklike figures.



Figure 1.5  
Madhubani Painting, Bihar  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Paintings of the Zulu tribe of Africa have an intrinsic sense of geometry. Patterns of lines and circles dominate most artworks. The patterns are usually related to some notion of masculinity, femininity, fertility or cattle.

In the early Minoan period, Minoan ceramics were characterised by linear patterns of spirals, triangles, curved lines, crosses, fishbone motifs and such.

The aborigine art of Australia is in many ways similar to Gond painting of Madhya Pradesh. The style of using many coloured dots and lines to build up an image is present in both art forms.

The paintings based on narrative traditions are evident in storytellers scrolls. Performers of the Chitrakathi (picture-story) tradition of Maharashtra utilize a series of pictures on sheets of the same size, pasted back to back, which they display one at a time. The performers of the Phad tradition of Rajasthan employ a very wide cloth on which all the episodes are painted, and they illuminate one episode at a time as they perform the story throughout the night. The Jadupatua (magic painter) tradition of Bengal and Bihar is exceptional in having both a narrative function in its vertical scroll paintings and ritual functions in its mortuary portraits and image of death-delivering demon.

The *chitrakars*, or the people engaged in painting, employ the special compositions and characteristic forms and materials of their particular forms and material of their particular area, district or even village as they clearly bear the heritage of generations of craftsmanship. Numerous traditions of wall painting particularly belonging to a specific region have evolved and continue to evolve in India's many geographically and culturally distinct regions. Some traditions depict figurative imagery in their wall paintings and yet others prefer geometric abstractions of visible forms, such as flowers.

Most tribal and folk paintings make use of mineral, earth, organic and alchemical colours. The four categories of pigments illustrate the name, source and method of production.

Mineral pigments are made from mineral rocks and stones 'extracted' from the earth, some of which are semi-precious stones, for example malachite,



lapis lazuli, and ultramarine. Some pigments are made from earth surface deposits, for example *ramraj*-yellow ochre and *geru*-red ochre. Organic pigments are made from plant, animal or insect, known as *lae* or dye colours, for example red lac is derived from an insect; and *neel*, indigo, from a plant. Alchemical pigments are made by a chemical process, for example, *sindur* etc.

After independence of the country, Indian tribal and folk paintings came into the limelight and were exhibited in Festivals of India and other national and international exhibitions along with contemporary art. The size of the paintings was reduced and the surface on which paintings were done was switched over from walls and floors to paper and fabric to make it commercially viable. The themes were curtailed so as to fit into the smaller canvas. Though the content and the style remained the same but due to exposure on the world stage and new themes they tried to incorporate those by painting them in their traditional style.



Figure 1.3  
Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





# Pithora Painting





Figure 2.1  
 Sacred Pithora Painting, Gujarat  
 Source : Crafts Museum, New Delhi







## Origin

Pithora paintings are made on walls by the Bhil and Bhilala of Dhar, Jhabua of Madhya Pradesh, the Rathwas of Panchmahal and Baroda, districts of Gujarat to honour their god, Baba Pithora (God of village) during the spring season. There is a noticeable difference between the style of painting and colour scheme between Bhils and Rathwas but the subject-matter and rituals are almost similar. From the perspective of colour scheme, the Pithora paintings created by Bhils of Madhya Pradesh are more primitive, sober and limited colours are used whereas the ones made by Rathwas of Gujarat are more descriptive, decorative and bright. Pithora paintings are actually an integral part of the rituals performed to thank Baba Pithora for their wish fulfilment. It is considered auspicious to paint the house walls with the images of a deity during occasions of birth of a child, good harvest, marriage etc. as they bring peace, prosperity and happiness. Anybody who owns a Pithora painting is highly respected. The person who is expert in Pithora painting is called *Lakhindra*. Only male members are allowed to learn the art. Women are not allowed to practice this art form.

The wall surfaces are the canvases for painting the sacred Pithoras replete with images of horses and the riders. Each horse and its rider is given the name of the Bhil deity. One horse and rider is designated *Ganhotra Bapa*, taking after *Ganapati*, the elephant headed God, another is *Raja Bhoj*, another again becomes the *Pithoro Deva*. In some instances, the horses are painted without riders.

## Theme

The main myth is painted within a *cok* or a sacred enclosure, which is a rectangular space, bound on all four sides by ornate borders. Generally, the



uppermost section of the enclosure, above a wavy line, with geometric motifs, represents the world of gods. Just below this line is a procession of marriage of Pithoro (Figure 2.1). On top, the Sun, the Moon, monkeys and other figures are drawn. The last row has figures like elephants, with *Raja Bhoj*. The lower half of the enclosure depicts the other characters of the myth wherein the Earth, the mythical farmer, the cowherd, the kings, the *bania*, the *badvo*, the cow and the bull, various creatures of the forest and minor deities are shown. The entire process of making a Pithora painting is a ritual comprising narration, singing and drumming in which the whole community participates. Once the painting is completed, in the evening after the professional drummers arrive the *badvo* or the head priest commences the ritual of identification of the figures in the painting. The head of the household holds the lamp in his left hand and gently moves his right palm over the flame towards the painting as a token of offering and does the same towards the *badvo*. The *badvo* seizes a sword in his left hand, and with his right hand points at figures in the painting one by one and recounts stories from the mythological episodes that are featured there.

## Technique

At first the main wall of the house is repaired specially for Pithora. Then, the wall surface is given a coating of plaster made from clay and dung. This is done by unmarried girls. The adjoining side walls are also replastered. Horses shown on their wall paintings represent Lord Ganesh, Ramdev, Pithora, Pithorani and Walan, the rain god. The motif of a horse is drawn partly by hand and partly by means of a block. The knife incisions to mark and delineate various sections are demarcated by lines of brownish ochre. Thereafter are painted Pithora, his consort, and other figures like Raja Bhoj seated on the elephant and the lord of the plough represented by a farmer ploughing with a pair of bullocks. Horses, elephants, tigers, birds, men and objects of daily life are painted in bright multicoloured hues to fill in the picture space. The paintings are imbued with rhythm, balance and movement. The paintings have a rectangular boundary around it with the gate at the bottom from where starts the marriage procession. This colourful indigenous art form uses colour from various mixes of pigments with milk and water. The natural colours like white is made from lime, green from *balor* leaf extract, black from lampblack and red from *sindur*, vermilion etc. Brushes are made of branches of *tesu* or Palash tree.



# Gond Painting







Figure 3.1  
Gond painting, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



## Origin

The Gonds, the largest *adivasi* community in India are of Dravidian origin and can be traced to the pre-Aryan era. The word 'Gond' comes from *Kond*, which means green mountains in the Dravidian idiom. Dravidian languages have received their name from the Sanskrit word '*dravida*', which was used by medieval Indian authors as a denomination of the South Indian peoples and their tongues. The Gond called themselves *Koi* or *Koiture*, but others called them Gond since they lived in the green mountains.

The Gond tribe is spread across Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. In Madhya Pradesh, for centuries they inhabited the dense forests of the Vindhyas, Satpura and Mandla in the Narmada region of the Amarkantak range.

The Gonds narrate stories about their dogmas, gods, festivals, demons and everything else related to their way of life through paintings. It is an art form in which the painting in itself conveys folklore or a story. This art is practised chiefly by the Gond and Pardhan tribes of Mandla. On the occasion of festivals the walls and floors of houses are covered with beautiful colourful paintings. The forms take shape spontaneously in space. Interestingly, Gond paintings bear very strong resemblance to the art of the aborigines of Australia.

## Theme

The Gond paintings depict Lord Krishna, village deities like Marahi Devi, Phulvari Devi, Sanphadki snake, Phulchukki *chiriya* (bird), Sarpoti tree, etc. They reflect the artists' creativity and unique view of things around them. Bold pictures of horses, tigers, birds, stags, spirits and humans are painted in many bright colours. The variety and diversity of Gond paintings is unlimited. Some of them also depict the symbiotic relationship between man and the animals, the web cycle, interdependence of plants and animals etc. The central theme of most of the paintings is flora and fauna.

The Gond paintings reflect the realm of tribal life, their fears and aspirations rather than an icon demanding worship. The main motive of these paintings was to ensure fertility, safeguard the people from wild animals, avert disease and evil and propitiate the dead. They were drawn to celebrate festivals and also to please the spirits for aphrodisical purposes.



## Technique

The Gond tribal community has a unique painting style that makes extensive use of dots, fine lines, dashes and other geometric shapes like elliptical, triangular and oval, which add depth and texture. Well defined figures are embellished with clear cut lines to give them a unique appeal. These paintings are borderless and are based on the elaboration of the dots.

The imagery of these paintings is loud and bold. Colours used for painting on walls and floor are made from different kinds of soils and other organic things available in the village. For example, black clay or wood coal is used for black, *chhui* soil or lime is used for white, red comes from a red coloured soil called *geru*, yellow is from *ramraj* soil and for light green, Gonds use cow dung. Certain colours have special significance and are used to depict specific emotions and elements. For example, red is associated with fear, orange with religious thoughts and green with nature. Several Gond paintings are also executed in black and white.

Before painting, the wall and floor are thoroughly cleaned and prepared. A paste made up of straw, cow dung and soil is applied on the walls or floors to be painted. Once the paste dries, a special kind of soil known as *chhui* is made wet and applied on the entire painting surface. *Chhui* clay is white in colour and provides a nice and smooth white coloured background for painting. Once the soil dries, the Gonds go to work with their paints and brushes. The brush used for wall painting is made by crushing particular tree barks and scraping their ends into a fibrous form. The brush is locally called *koochi*. For detailing such as drawing thin lines and dotting the painting, thin twigs are used. With such simple paints and tools, Gonds create magic. The beautifully patterned pictures bring alive the Gond culture.







Figure 3.2  
Gond painting, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Figure 3.3  
Gond painting, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



Figure 3.4  
Gond painting, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



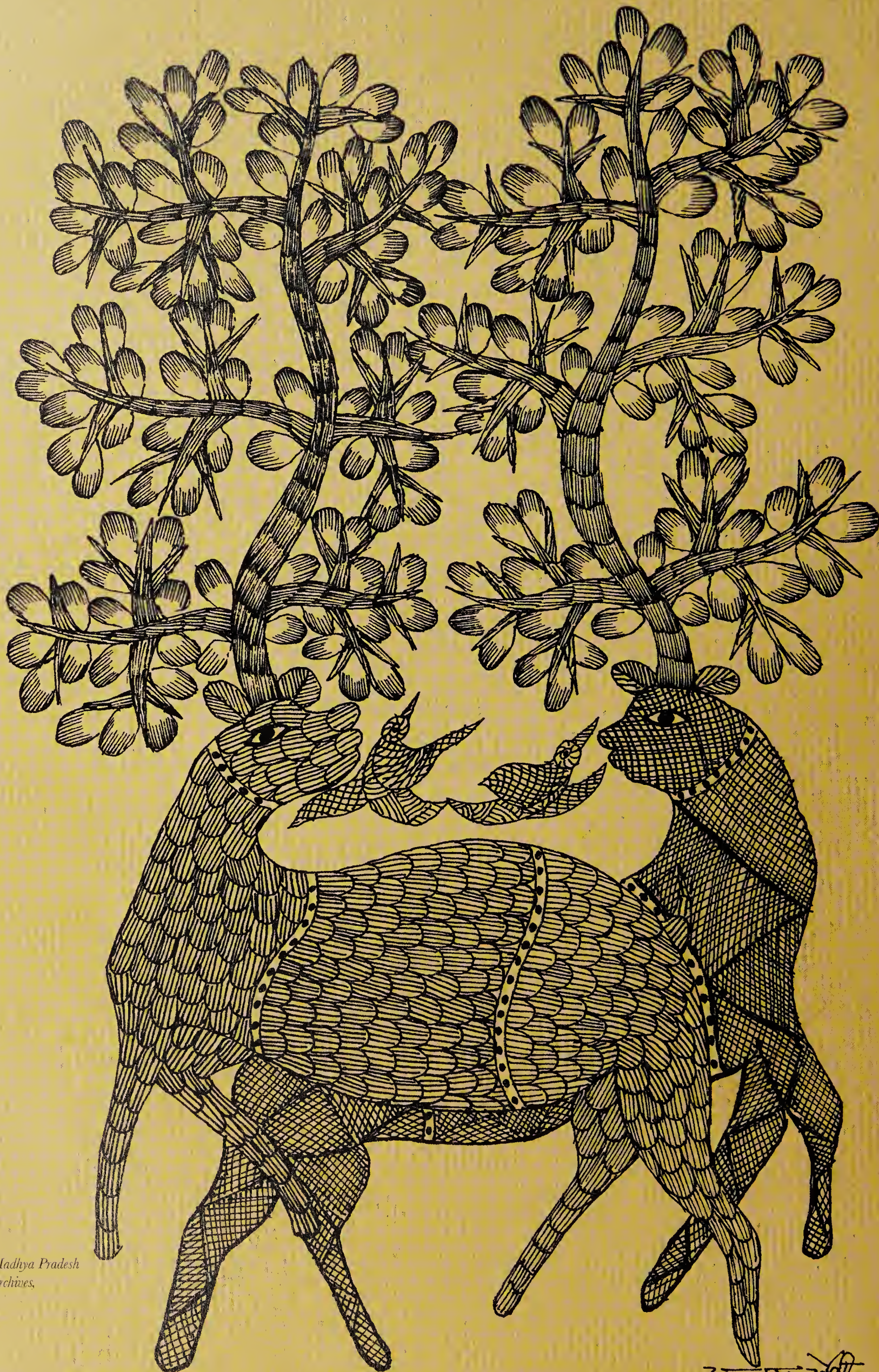


Figure 3.5  
Gond painting, Madhya Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives,  
New Delhi





# Warli Painting







Figure 4.2  
Tarpa dance, Warli painting, Maharashtra  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



## Origin

The word 'Warli' is derived from *Warla*, meaning "piece of land" or "field". Warli paintings are primarily done on the walls of homes with rice paste during marriage rituals or after the harvest season. Warli is the main tribe to be found on the northern outskirts of Mumbai, in Western India and extends up to the Gujarat border. The Warlis inhabit small villages of thatched mud-huts, which are constructed in such a way that they all surround a central cell. The origin of the Warlis is yet unknown and no records of this art are found, but many scholars and folklorists believe that it can be traced to as early as the tenth century C.E. Traditionally, it was women who painted these wonderful paintings and were joined by men later. Warli art became popular in the early seventies. It was the only means of transmitting folklore to a general populace not well versed in the written word.

## Theme

Warli paintings are narrative paintings which require performance gestures and movement with little scope for facial expression. Most of the characters are in dialogue with each other.



Figure 4.3  
Palaghat goddess, Caukat, Warli painting, Maharashtra  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



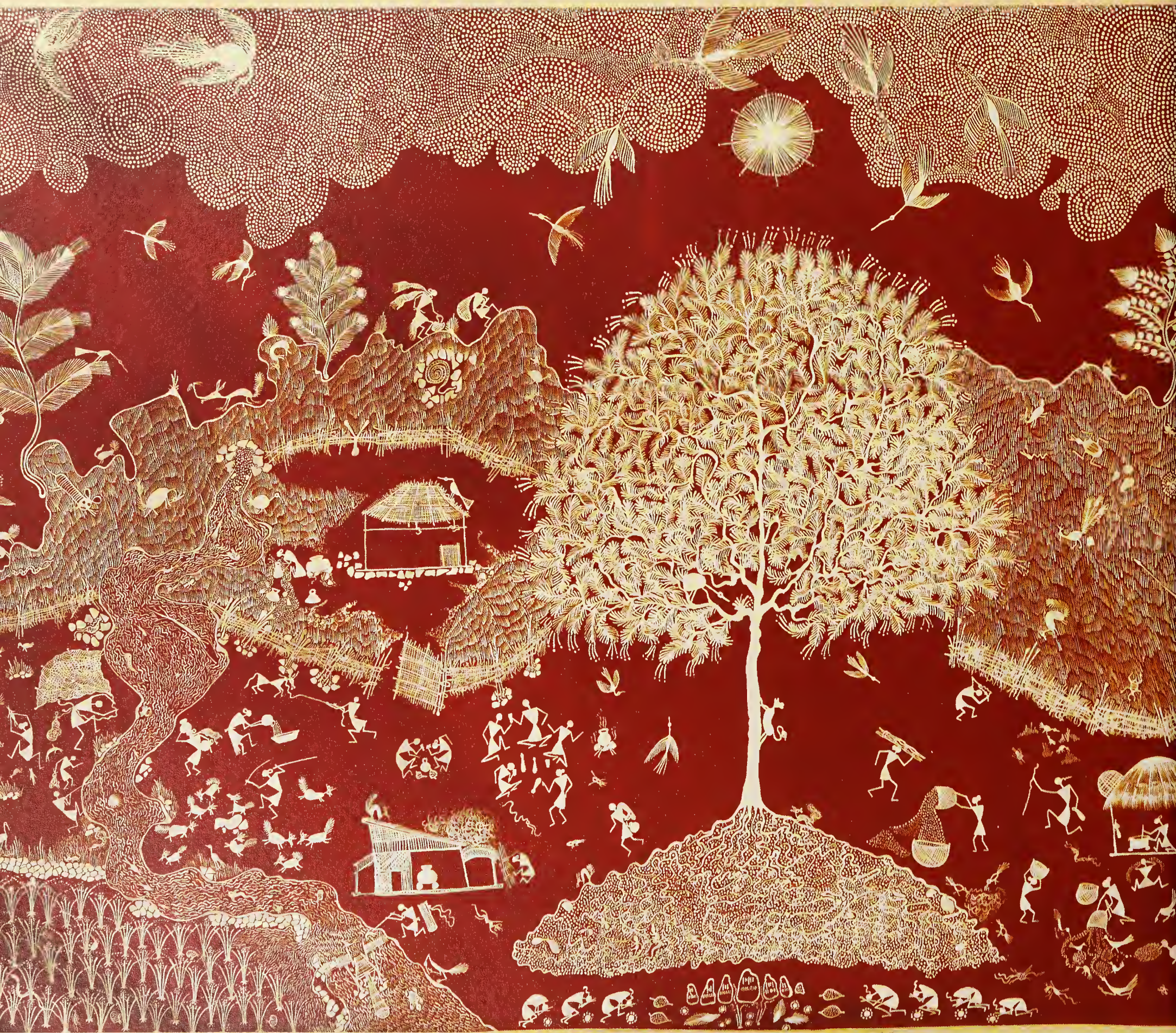


Figure 4.1  
Warli painting, Maharashtra  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





The art form deals with themes that narrate the social lifestyle and activities of the Warlis i.e. hunting, fishing, farming, forest activities and village life. During the harvest season, weddings and births, their houses are adorned with paintings. The Warlis are predominantly farmers whose life is governed by the monsoon cycle. As their life is closely linked to nature, they worship it in different forms—Sun and moon, god of thunder, lightning, wind, rain and several others. Gods are worshipped according to the seasons. After the first rice cycle, they worship the god of rain and it's called the festival of *Naranadeva*. This is then followed by the worship of household gods, in the festival of *Hirva*, *Nimai* and *Jhoting*. Next is the festival of Tiger God, and then is *Kansari*, the goddess of grain.

The paintings depict humans and animals amidst a festive atmosphere – a group of men and women dancing around a person playing the harp, dancing peacocks etc. Men and women are depicted engaged in a harvest scene, cultivating land and hunting and many more day to day activities. Spiral formations of men and women and concentric circular designs in Warli Paintings are symbolic of the Tarpa dance as can be seen in Figure 4.2. For Warlis, life is best represented by a circle which doesn't have a beginning or an end. At all occasions—birth, marriage and death—they draw circles. Death is not an end for them; but a new beginning. This circular and spiral movement gives an everlasting joy.

### Technique

The Warli painting is simplistic in character with human figures made of triangles and stick like hands and legs and a variety of flora and fauna in geometrical shapes. Warli paintings are practised generation after generation and there is no formal training given to the artists. They simply paint on mud and cow dung based surface, coated with *geru* (red mud) first and then with rice paste for the colour white. These paintings are simplistic but full of life. Salati grass or bamboo sticks are used in place of brush for painting.

The most striking aspect of the Warli painting is the *caukat* - a dazzling square consisting of circles, triangles, diagonals, polygons and other geometrical shapes (see Figure 4.3). It occupies the central place in the painting. Within the *caukat* is drawn the Palaghat goddess - the goddess



of trees and plants – a symbol of creative energy. The literal meaning of the word ‘Palaghat’ is a pot overflowing with plants. Marriage rituals do not take place without the painting of Palaghat goddess, the deity of fertility.

The technique of drawing the Palaghat goddess herself is interesting. First an isosceles triangle is drawn on which another inverted isosceles triangle is placed and slanted vertical lines are drawn in the triangles. Thin small legs, hands raised to shower blessings, and the head are portrayed. No marriage can take place without the bride and groom seeking the blessings of the Palaghat Devi. Only women whose husbands are alive – *savasini* – can paint *caukat* or Palaghat Goddess. It is the central theme of the Warli paintings.

In Warli paintings, the pictorial space is divided diagonally, horizontally, or vertically in the middle, or by creating enclosures within landscapes demarcated by piles of stones and islands of sand, amidst fields or water bodies. Each image – whether of an ant, a tiger, a human, a hill, a tree, a river, a snake hole or a field - finds its own space in the painting without an overlap. All space is two dimensional and distance in time is indicated by distance in space. All characters, whether in the open or underground, behind a cloud or in a cave, are equally visible and have their own individual space in which to act out their role.



# Saura Pictograph





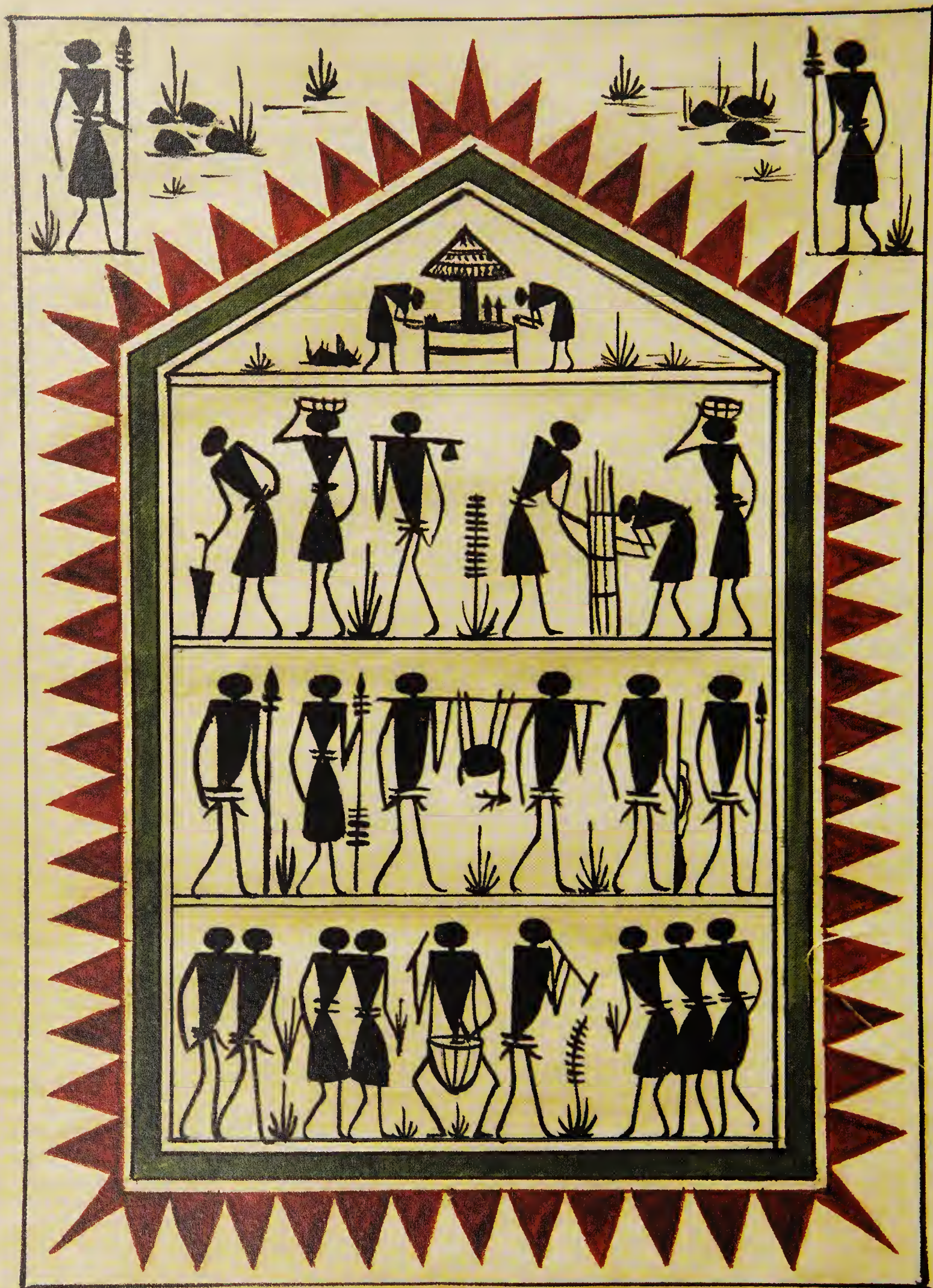


Figure 5.1  
Saura painting, Odisha  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



## Origin

Hailing from the tribal culture of Odisha's Rayagada, Gajapati and Koraput districts, Saura paintings are practised by the local tribe called Saura (also called Sora, Sabara and Sour). The Sauras are one of the oldest tribes of India. These tribes have been mentioned in texts like Ramayana and Mahabharata. In the Puranas they are called the Vindhya Maulikas, the wanderers in the Vindhyas. In the 7th and 8th centuries they made their presence felt in Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, in Ganjam, Keonjhar and Puri in Odisha, and in Andhra. They practised medicine and had a vast knowledge of herbs and of *mantras* to induce healing. The Sabaras worship their ancestral god, Sonum, in the form of sacred pots smeared with turmeric and filled with rice, chillies, garlic and salt. These pots are hung from the roof.

## Theme

In the Saura tribal community a pictograph is made during times of adversity, disease and death. The Sabaras were reputed to excel in witchcraft, magic and astrology. The Saura artist is usually the magician priest, the Kuranmaran. Among the various themes of the Saura painting, the most important one is that of the Ittal, the Saura deity attached with signs and symbols. It functions as a means of worship and a medium of invocation. The Sauras believe that their world is peopled by a great company of gods, ghosts and spirits of nature as well as of their ancestors. These spaces in the paintings serve as temporary dwellings or rest houses for the spirits in the living world. The inspiration for the compositions of these paintings or *ittalam*, may arise from the desire to honour the recently deceased, to commemorate the celebration of a certain festival, from the need to cure an illness, ensure safe birth of a child, agriculture related rituals etc. The Sun God, Uyungan, is painted by Sauras as the creator and life-giver of seed. The diagram of Sun is held sacred but is never an object of worship. The solar eclipse is depicted as the swallowing of Sun by the primordial snake. Scenes of hunting, riding and male occupations predominate.

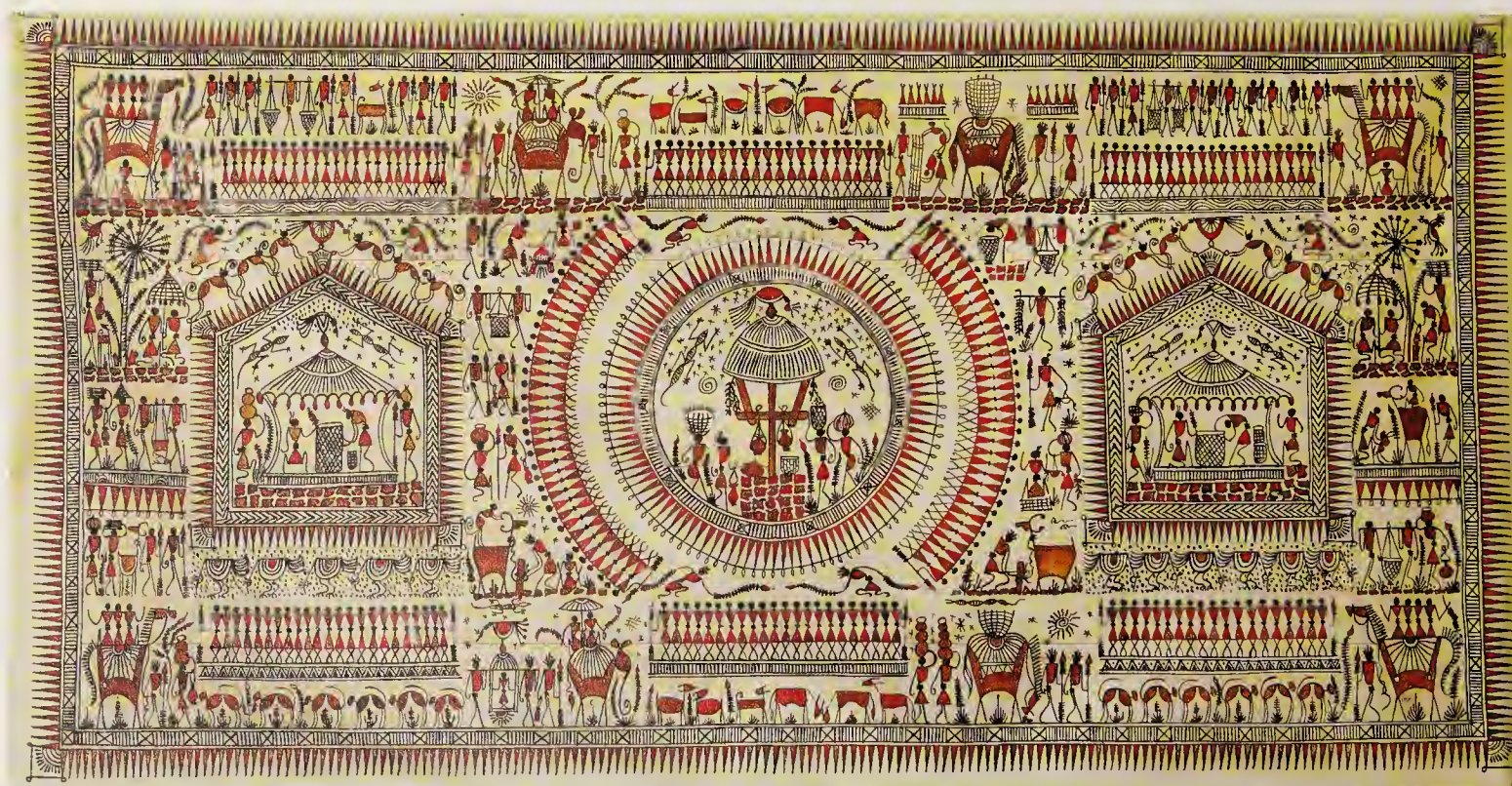
## Technique

Painting an icon is an act of ritual divination. It is believed that the painter or the Ittal Maran - creator of the Ittal - paints under the dictates of the spirit possessed by the *shaman* or may himself get possessed with the spirit in the process. Therefore, great sanctity is associated with the work of such paintings.



To begin with, the wall on which a painting is to be drawn is washed with fresh red earth and water to provide a good background. The painter uses a twig slightly splayed at the end. For paint, he uses materials that are available locally. The main pigment for the Saura icons is white, which is either obtained from rice, ash, chalk or lime mixed with water. At times he gives emphasis to his figures with lampblack, red ochre, indigo blue, and yellow. The general format of the painting is in the form of a house, like a *kothi* in a rectangular or square space and starts filling it up in accordance with the dictates. The ritual begins with the divination by the *shaman* who identifies the spirit that has caused the calamity and requires appeasement. The spirit is then invoked and by means of chantings and spells is invited to come and occupy the one dimensional temple that has been specially painted for it. There is practically no empty space left in these paintings. The space within the frame is filled with horses and riders, monkeys on trees, the Sun and the new moon, the elephant, the deer, the tiger, the peacock, and dancing human forms and when the space cannot hold any more forms, drawings of trees, motor cars, trains, all the moving and static objects of Sabara environment appear around the framework.

Figure 5.2  
Saura painting, Odisha  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





# Santhal Painting





## Origin

One of the largest tribal communities of India is that of the Santhals. The Santhal tribe is spread across Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and beyond. Particularly in West Bengal, they dwell in the districts of Birbhum, Bankura, Bardhaman and Medinipur districts. These paintings are in the form of narrative scrolls as well as ritual images on the walls. The clay wall is worked by hand to produce an image in low relief which is then painted with bright locally made dyes. In wall paintings, most of the motifs drawn by Santhal women are geometric figures such as triangles, squares, parallelograms, and creepers. Animals and birds predominate in the imagery decorating the exterior walls of the homes.

The rolled *patas* or scrolls are painted by professional painters who call themselves *chitrakars*. There are three kinds of paintings: the first category is a longish rolled paper with the theme of divine figure or description of any memorable event, the second category is laterally rolled paper and third category is square shaped painting which is generally termed as '*Jadupatua*' or magical painting of enlightenment.

The *Jadupatuas* are traditional painters who depict the activities of the Santhals such as dancing in a group, worshipping Tiger's god (Figure 6.1) etc. The figures of animals are the most powerful images. They are striking and confrontational, with bodies in profile, heads dominated by wide staring eyes mesmerizing the viewer. A bearded Gazi holding a rosary and a club rides a human-faced tiger, shown however, with leopard's spots in Figure 6.1. *Bongas* are the oracles who convey the message of God. Some of the paintings depict the Santhal story of creation (Figure 6.2); the Baha (flower) festival and scenes from the Kingdom of Death. Santhal traditions are deeply interwoven with the forest, the cycle of seasons and hunting-gathering etc. The paintings are related not only with the hunters but also non-humans, deities and animals. During the Baha festival, they worship deities and pray for well-being and good health, food, protection of cattle, rain and good harvest. The forest, which provides flowers, fruits, tubers and game, becomes the place where one encounters war and death. The blowing of the horn marks the wars, but when the fight ceases, the village horn sounds to announce the return of the oracles and the celebration of the festival. The villagers dance and rejoice.



## Theme

The painting ‘*Santhal Janam Katha*’ or ‘Origin of the Universe’ (Figure 6.2) is based on the tribal myth which goes like this: many million years ago there was water everywhere and everything was submerged under it. The Supreme gods *Marang Buru* (the Creator), *Jaher Era*, wife of *Marang Buru*-the guardian of the sacred grove and *Sing Bonga* decided to rescue life. *Marang Buru* was instrumental in bringing two cows from heaven. Two moths were born from their saliva. These moths on growing up turned into birds. The birds kept flying as they couldn’t find a place to sit as there was water all around. To resolve this issue, *Marang Buru* created a fish, prawn and a crab. Their task was to bring mud from *pataal* (the third and lowest level of the Universe) and settle it on the water. However, they were unsuccessful in accomplishing this task, so *Marang Buru* created the earthworm. The earthworm was able to put a small quantity of mud on the water. *Marang Buru* then created a tortoise which floats on water with the objective of creating a base where the earthworm could collect mud. But it was difficult for the tortoise to float endlessly. So *Marang Buru* asked *Shesh Naag* (the Ultimate Snake) to spread its hood to allow the tortoise to rest on it. This is the story of creation of earth. The birds laid two eggs from which two humans-male and female- *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* were born. They were the first Santhals.

*Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* had seven sons and eight daughters. Finding it difficult to manage them, they approached *Marang Buru* to find a solution. *Marang Buru* asked *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* to go to Khararai forest and collect some *bakar* (a fermenting agent) to prepare *hanrhiya* (rice beer) and call him when the beer was ready. However, they forgot to call *Marang Buru*. Instead, they consumed huge amount of beer and started fighting amongst themselves. *Marang Buru* rushed to the spot and asked *Pilchu Haram* to take seven sons and reside in Khararai forest and similarly *Pilchu Budhi* was sent to Surhur forest alongwith eight daughters. Years passed and the children became adults. One fine day the boys and girls met in the forest. The boys saw the girls singing and swinging under a Banyan tree. The boys and girls met and became friends. They started meeting everyday and fell in love. One day the seven boys married seven girls by putting dust into the parting of their hair. The eldest girl, *Kanta Budhi*, did not marry. Men and women sang





Figure 6.2  
Santhal Jhumu Katha, West Bengal/ Jharkhand  
Source: National Museum, New Delhi

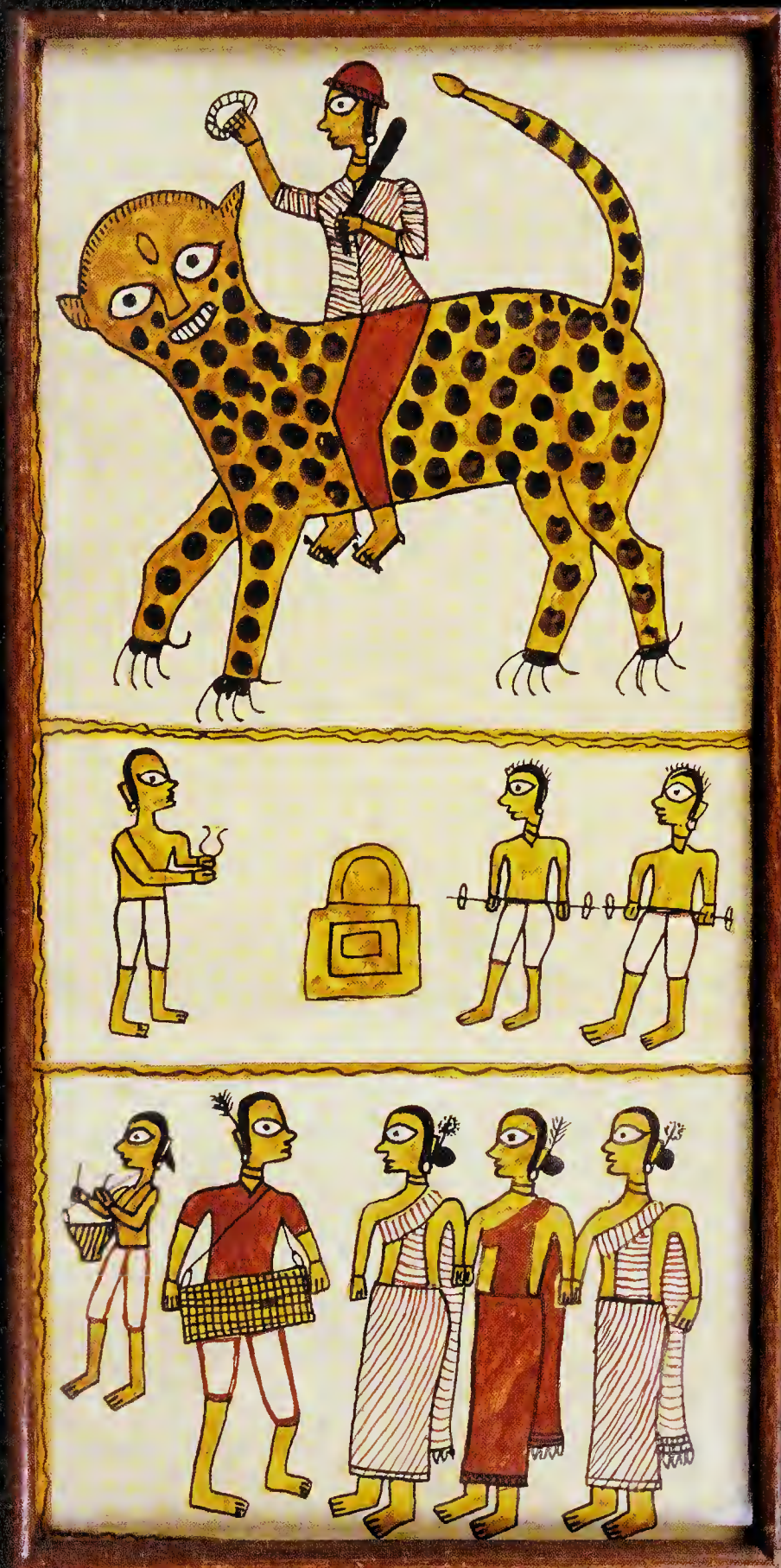


Figure 6.1  
The Tiger's God, Santhal painting, West Bengal/ Jharkhand  
Source: National Museum, New Delhi



and danced. After few days when *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* couldn't find their children, they started looking for them in the forest. After 12 years, they met each other and were surprised to know that their children despite of being brothers and sisters had married each other. *Marang Buru* appeared and blessed the couples. He asked the unmarried sister to look after the pregnant mothers and newborn babies. In return she was renamed *Marang Dei* and worshipped by everybody during the Bandhana festival. The men went to the forest to hunt. The elders gathered to make a code of conduct for the community. They sat on the lotus leaves and dictated that there will be no marriages between brothers and sisters or within the same clan. Time passed and the population increased. There was a man named *Gadai Marandi* who had beautiful long hair and a girl from Kishku clan fell in love with him mainly because of his hair. However, he was suffering from elephantitis that results in swollen limbs. After seeing his limbs she refused to marry him, he got so enraged that he cut off her head in anger. This resulted in animosity between the clans of Kishkus and Marandis, marriage between them became taboo henceforth.

The myth generally ends with the ritual of *Chakshudaan* performed by the *Jadupatua*. When *Pilchu Haram* and *Pilchu Budhi* died, they were cremated so their souls could rest in peace. Their siblings went to *Marang Buru* to get salvation for the departed souls. *Marang Buru* then created *Jadupatua* with the sole objective of guiding the departed souls to heaven through the ritual of *Chakshudaan*. There is a popular belief among Santhals that the wandering souls of the dead are not able to see till an eye is painted on the *Chaksudaan* pat. Therefore, an eye is painted on this scroll by *Jadupatuas* after receiving a payment in the eye bestowal ceremony so that the spirit of the dead will be able to see. The journey of the soul becomes easier if the *Jadupatua* is offered hen, goat, utensils, food and other items.

## Technique

As the *pata* painting is a tribal art, all its tools and colour ingredients are produced by an indigenous process. For wall paintings, four different colours, namely white, black, saffron and blue are mainly used by the Santhal tribes. White is obtained from lime, black from the ash of burnt straw mixed with water, saffron from mixing red ochre with water and



blue (indigo) is bought from the market. In some of the paintings, thick coats of clay blended with water are first applied on the walls with torn pieces of cloth. Then while the coating is still damp, a selected design is carved on it with fingertips. On drying, the design comes out in a striking manner with no colour being used. *Jadupatua* scrolls are typically narrow and seldom exceed 12 inches in width. Scrolls are made of inexpensive sheets of paper that have been glued or sewn together and attached at each end to bamboo poles as rollers. Initially, the *Jadupatuas* used vegetable or mineral colours for instance yellow colour from turmeric, green from leaves of kidney beans or by grinding dried leaves of wood apples. Violet colour is made from the juice of rose apple or spinach. The colours used are mixed in small earthen cups or in coconut shells cut into the shapes of bowls. The gum of wood apple or margosa or neem tree is added to the paint, or in some cases it is blended with a paste of boiled tamarind seeds or the yolk of eggs in order to provide glaze to the colour and also ensure that the paint grips the surface properly. However, in the 20th century they started relying on commercial paint products. By and large, a limited palette of earth colours are used to paint these scrolls. Fine and coarse brushes are made of hair collected from a young lamb's shoulder or stomach. Very fine brushes are made from hair gathered from squirrel's body or from a mongoose's tail.



# Cherial Scroll Painting





## Origin

Cherial scroll paintings belong to Andhra Pradesh. Cherial in Warangal district is the traditional centre of this art. The traditional caste based groups from Jingor, Muchi and Mera known as *nakkash*, paint these paintings. Such scrolls were used by the story tellers accompanied by the musicians, alongwith dolls and masks made of coconut shell while the larger ones are made out of sawdust and wood called *tella puniki* smeared with tamarind seed paste. Story tellers sing the narrative depicted in these paintings. The storyteller's are accompanied with other performers who sit with their musical instruments on a large wooden bench to the left of the image. The scroll is ritually consecrated in a series of small ceremonies before displaying it to the public. The performance with the painted scroll is a momentous event in the lives of the community of people who commission the performance. The houses of these people are whitewashed, cleaned and painted. Married daughters and their extended families are invited from nearby villages. Each household incurs expenses equivalent to hosting a daughter's wedding for this event.

Figure 7.1  
Cherial scroll painting,  
Andhra Pradesh,  
Source: Crafts Museum,  
New Delhi





## Theme

Irrespective of the subject-matter, Cherial paintings begin with the painting of Lord Ganesha, remover of obstacles and then of Saraswati, goddess of learning. It is believed that Viswakarma, the architect of heaven, was instructed in the art and science of painting and had the knowledge to transmit his skill to the people of the earth. In this tradition, artists in the Telengana region called '*Kaki Padagollu*', story-telling community use scroll paintings known as *Telengana Phad* or Cherial paintings as visual aids to narrate stories.

The common themes are from the Krishna Leela, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Shiva Puranam, Markandeya Puranam interspersed with the ballads and folk-stories of communities like Gauda, Madiga and so on. Mythological stories painted on cloth run into several metres. These stories are also painted on cardboard, plywood, hardboard and paper and often used to decorate walls in homes. Unlike paintings of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Odisha, the Cherial scrolls focus not so much on religious aspects and mythology as on daily aspects of life of fishermen, cobblers, fruit gatherers etc. The main narrative is spiced up with scenes from simple rural life - women doing chores in the kitchen, men working in the paddy fields or dancing away in merry abandon, festival scenes, etc. The costumes and settings in which the figures are depicted are typical and reflect the culture of Andhra. The most important character is drawn in large dimension and most detailed. The lesser characters have smaller dimensions with less details.





## Technique

The Khadi cotton is thrice treated with a mixture of starch (from rice), *suddha matti* (white mud), a paste of boiled tamarind seeds and gum water. It has to be ensured that every coating is thoroughly dried before the next one is applied. Once the canvas is ready, the artists sketch the outline directly onto the canvas using a brush. Brushes are made with the hair of squirrels tied to a stick. The outlines are well defined, sharp and reflect the quality and experience of the craftsman. The colours are made by the artists from natural sources. The background colour of these paintings is generally red. In the past, natural dyes were used. White was obtained from ground sea shells, black from lamp soot, yellow from turmeric, blue from indigo and the others from various vegetable dyes and crushed stones. The colour of the face and skin is decided by the nature of the character, so blue and yellow are for Gods and Goddesses respectively. Brown or darker shades are for demons, while pink and skin tones are for humans. The scroll measures about 3 feet in width and can extend over 40 feet. The scrolls contain about 40 to 50 panels, each depicting a part of the story. On an average there are more than 500 figures on a scroll. Each panel is displayed as the story unfolds. It takes four nights at times to complete the narrative. The storytellers are equipped with a variety of delivery styles, repertoires of songs, invocations, jokes and riddles to enrich the narrative.



Figure 7.2  
Cherial scroll painting, Andhra Pradesh  
Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi



# Ganjifa

(Hand Painted Playing Cards)





## Origin

The artists of Bishnupur in Bankura district of West Bengal produced a special set of cards known as Ganjifa cards in the 14th century C.E., a substitute of present day playing cards. They depicted ten *avatars* or incarnations of Lord Vishnu-Pisces, Tortoise, Boar, the Man-Lion, the Dwarf, Ram, Parshuram, Balaram, Krishna and Kalki. Together these 120 specimens of *dashavatar* cards form a spectacular piece of art. It had various suits like *Kalki avatar* suit, *Parshurama avatar* suit, *Ram avatar* suit, *Vaman avatar* suit etc. Each category contained 12 cards.

The word 'Ganjifa' literally means wealth of money and grains. The Ganjifa cards are referred to by Abul Fazal in the Mughal period under the reign of Akbar in the 16th century C.E. *Ain-i-Akbari* written by Abul Fazl, mentions two sets of cards, one for commoners and one for



Figure 8.1  
Ganjifa playing cards  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



ascetics. The method of playing Ganjifa cards is described in *Humayun Nama*, written by Begum Gulbadan. The Arabic word for playing cards is *waraq*, which literally means a leaf or a page. A *waraq* contained 240 cards. Ganjifa had eight suits instead of four in present day cards, two black and two red.

Ganjifa cards made in Bishnupur, Bankura district of West Bengal are similar to *Ganjappa* cards of Odisha. Ganjifa cards made in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra are of two kinds: *Darbari* cards have decorative borders and *Bazaar* cards are without a border. The king of Mysore-Tipu Sultan also patronized the making of Ganjifa Cards.

### Theme

Predominantly, there were two different styles of cards for Hindu and Muslim. The cards in the Muslim style had illustrations suiting the nomenclature of the court (96 card set). There were 8 suits of 12 cards each. They were represented by various images of horses, elephants, serpents, men or soldiers, ladies, forts, treasures, battleships, divinities, demons and jungles. Since each character was divided into the trio of king, minister and suit sign, the cards had interesting stylized illustrations of each. *Ashwapati*, known as the king of *Dilli* was represented on horseback, with an umbrella, while his minister was shown seated on a horse. The suit sign was a horse. *Gajapati* or the lord of elephants was said to represent the king of Odisha, while *Narpati* was the king of Bijapur in the Deccan. The military characters represented on these cards were more powerful than the others. The less complicated characters of the eight-suited *ganjifa* pack had eight king characters such as '*Padish-i-zari-i-surkh*', the king of the gold coin, dispensing money from his throne, or the '*Padishah-i-barat*', the king of the documents, inspecting papers on his throne. Other kings represented in the cards were of merchandise, yaks, harps, swords, slaves and so on. Gradually the other variants of the cards evolved like *Navagraha*-nine planets, Ramayana version, *Dasa Mahavidya* cards, illustrating 10 incarnations of Mother Goddess, Sati etc.

### Technique

Ganjifa cards are handmade, round-shaped playing cards. The dimensions of regular cards is 5-7 cm diameter. Wet cotton rags are



layered and pasted on the base with tamarind glue. Once the cloth becomes dry, a paste of chalk is applied on both the faces. Thereafter, a smooth piece of stone is used to level both surfaces of the cloth. When the base is ready, circular pieces of sizes are cut out from the cloth and the pictures of the *avatars* are neatly painted on one side by using light brushes. After the completion of the painting, a paste of shellac and vermilion powder is applied on the back side of the card.

Depending upon regional variations and usage by different sections of society, the designing of the cards varied from region to region. Ganjifa cards for the elite were made of ivory, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, or of inlaid or enameled precious metals. Other materials used for making Ganjifa cards were wood, leather, silver, sandalwood and fish seals. Palm-leaf, starched cotton fabric or papers were materials used for commoners. The colours used were natural, extracted from plants and vegetables. The colours most often used were rust, cream, yellow, black, red and green.

Figure 8.2  
Ganjifa playing cards  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi







# Madhubani Painting





## Origin

Madhubani is a village in the district of Mithilanchal in Bihar. The Madhubani painting originated in the area named 'Mithilanchal' where King Janak ruled or in other words the birthplace of Sita. The origin of this art form can be traced to the epic of Ramayana as Tulsidas gives a vivid account of Mithilanchal being decorated with Mithila painting at the wedding of Sita with Ram. There are ample references to Mithila painting in Banabhatta's Harshaacharita. Its roots can be traced to Harappa and Mohenjodaro period which is remarkable for any living tradition.

At present, half of the area of ancient Mithilanchal is in Nepal and rest in Bihar. During the period from 1960 to 1970, Mithila painting became mobile and commercialised. The shift from the traditional, ritual-bound wall painting to individual artistic creations on paper led to the emergence of several highly renowned women painters such as Sita Devi, Ganga Devi, Mahasundari Devi and Baua Devi. The main commercial centre became Madhubani, hence the name "Madhubani" painting.



Figure 9.1  
Kohabara Ghar, Madhubani  
painting, Bihar  
Source: Sanskriti Museum,  
New Delhi





Figure 9.4  
Madhubani, painting on paper, Bihar  
Source: National Museum, New Delhi

The art is practised in villages of Mithilanchal, some of those villages are Jitwarpur, Simri, Bhavanipur, Laheriyaganj and Tarouni. There are hundreds of villages where this art form is practised. It cuts across the barriers of caste, race or creed as it is practised by a wide cross-section of people.

These paintings are drawn on auspicious occasions such as birth of a child, sacred-thread ceremony of the Brahmins etc. -*sathhudi*, a ritual observed during the seventh and ninth month of pregnancy; *chatiyar puja*, done on the sixth day after the birth of a child; *annaprashan*, to mark a child's first eating of grain; *akshararambh*, to mark a child's entry into the world of learning; *janaur*, to mark the symbolic rebirth of young Brahmin boys; marriages and deaths. Festivals like the 'Chhath', the 'Chauth Chand' i.e. the fourth day of the Hindu month of 'Bhadra' (August-September) and the 'Devatthan Ekadasi' provide the main occasions for the painting.

In early times only women used to sometimes paint while singing auspicious songs. The women of the region had neither education nor formal training in painting. The art form was handed down from one generation to the next. In the process, there have been changes and embellishments, but the basic style has remained unaltered. It came to



the forefront only in 1967, when a drought hit the area and people had to think of an alternative livelihood. Selling these traditional paintings on handmade paper was the best alternative and Madhubani became the centre of the export of these paintings.

## Theme

Mysticism, folklore and regional versions of Hindu epics are the most common subjects of Madhubani paintings. Religion plays an important role in lifestyle and tradition of the people of Bihar. It is because of their desire to please their gods and develop their spirituality that gave birth to Madhubani painting. Walls of the room where the family deities are worshipped (*gosain-ka-ghar*) are decorated with figures of all the deities—Durga, Shiva-Parvati, Ram-Sita, Radha-Krishna, Ganesha, the 10 *avatars* of Vishnu, as well as the sun and moon.

One of the important themes of Mithila painting is *kohabara*. The main area of the house where these paintings are done is – the *kohabara ghar* – a room prepared for a groom where he stays at his in-laws place after the wedding. The *kohabara ghar* (Figure 9.1) is related to fertility and meant to bless the newly wed couple. This painting depicts the six lotus flowers encircling a single bamboo stem. These are fertility symbols. The lotus

Figure 9.2  
Dashavatara, Madhubani painting, Bihar  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





signifies the female and the bamboo represents the male generative powers. Fish, parrot, turtle, elephant, horses, peacock, banana and betel leaves that surround them are symbols of fertility and regeneration. The seven planets are symbolized by seven leaves. On the outer wall are drawn the figures of gods and goddesses i.e. Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita, Durga and Kali etc.

The paintings are largely based on folklore covering a wide range of subjects i.e. birds and animals, *gram* or *kuldevta*-Raja Salash and many others. There are four kinds of Mithila painting – the most popular is *Rangachitra* (it is always multi-coloured), *Rekhachitra* (line painting), *Godna* (tattoo painting), *Tantric* painting (mostly the figure is accompanied with *yantras*).

Some of the paintings centre around bride-groom going in a palanquin, marriage rites completion, betel creeper, clove tree and other motifs symbolising a wedding.

Madhubani paintings are mostly based on rituals. Intricate floral, animal and bird motifs, and symmetrical geometric designs fill up the gaps. Animals play an important role in the economy of rural Mithila. They are usually portrayed in a naturalistic manner with a neat profile. However, human figures are not naturalistic representations but simplified and linear in form.

Some of the paintings are based on the following themes: *Dashavatar* i.e ten incarnations of Vishnu-*Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narsimha*, *Vaman*, *Parshuram*, *Rama*, *Balarama*, *Buddha* and *Kalki* (Figure 9.2); *Dasmahavidya*-ten incarnations of Goddesses; *Solah Sanskara* for women and *Solah Sanskara* for men; *Krishna Leela*; *Ram Leela*; episodes from Mahabharata and Ramayana etc.

## Technique

The traditional base of freshly plastered mud wall usually whitewashed with lime has now been replaced by cloth, handmade paper and canvas. At first a sketch is made with coal or *kajal* and then filled with bright colours. A double line is drawn for outlines and the gap is filled with either cross or straight tiny lines. It is made without any prior sketching. The artists make colours from plant extracts; for example, yellow is





prepared from turmeric, black from burnt jowar or *kajal/diya's* soot, orange from the Palasa flower, red from Kusum, and green from the Bilva leaf. Fresh cow dung is also used. These juices are mixed with resin from banana leaves and ordinary gum to enable it to stick to the painting medium. Madhubani painters use a very unusual form of brush for the art. Handmade, the brush is created out of a bamboo stick, with its end being slightly frayed and covered with cotton. There is no shading in the application of colours.

Madhubani paintings are associated with festivities and celebrations. They have a distinctive style, easy to paint and bright vegetable colours are used which imparts them a lively and artistic look. The borders are highly decorated-either geometrically or with ornate floral patterns.

The impact of environment is discernible in the motifs, style, tools used for painting, religious occasions, means of entertainment, birth, marriage, death and also the harvest season.



Figure 9.3  
Madhubani painting, Bihar  
Source: National Museum, New Delhi



# Mata - ni - pachedi





## Origin

In Ahmedabad, Mata-ni-pachedi paintings on cloth pertaining to the mother goddess cult are made as votive offerings. The painting comprises 4-5 parts which together combine to form a shrine of Mother Goddess. The literal meaning of the term 'Mata-ni-pachedi' is "behind the idol of Mother Goddess". It is an aesthetic expression of the deeply set religious aspirations of the common folks in quest of bestowal of protection, well-being, prosperity and abundance.

The painting is done during the time of *navaratra*, the nine nights festival celebrated after the rains when the earth and the mothers awaken. It recounts the myths associated with the seven mother goddesses. Each part is a narrative-a stand alone story of the deity. Another form of Mata-ni-pachedi painting is *Matano candarvo* (canopy for the goddess). *Pachedi* is used as a canopy that forms a shrine, or is spread over altars or worn by the *shaman* while worshipping or in a trance. The Vaghari community is specially known to paint these *pachedis*. Only the men paint; the women are not allowed to conduct the sacred ritual.

Mata-ni-pachedi paintings are traditionally in maroon, black, white, but developments have brought back an exquisite variety of muted colours in vegetable dyes, reviving a 4000 year old tradition. The maroon and black colours were natural colours derived from alizarin and oxidized metal.

## Theme

Mata-ni-pachedi wall cloths are painted for rituals. A hand painted mother goddess is painted in the Kalamkari style. It is surrounded by block printed motifs, in which colour is filled in by family members. The *pachedi* has a distinct visual identity that is developed through the use of strong bold forms and reinforced by the application of stark colours-blood red, black and white.

One of the figure of the avenging goddess is painted in the centre shown riding on a male buffalo surrounded by other mythological figures, animals, birds and mystical decorations (Figure 10.2). From the crown of the mother springs sprouting corn. She is depicted as having multiple hands and holds various weapons like the sword, the spear, the dagger, the trident and arrows. She is surrounded by her devotees, milkmaids, Sun and the moon, horses and the riders etc. In her form as Bahuchara,



she is four-armed and holds the sword, the spear, a bell and a cup of blood. As Amba, the benign mother, she rides a camel, as Bhadrakali she is sixteen-armed and rides a tame buffalo. As Chamunda she rides a buffalo, as Kalika she sits on a cock, as Khodiyal, the lame mother, she sits on a peacock throne and as Jogan, the ancient sorceress, she strides forth, the sacral trefoil crown on her head. The *Bua*, the priests of the goddess, praise the mother goddess and sing songs in her glory in shrines in which a round earthen pot containing tender barley shoots is placed. The Mata ni pachedi paintings on cloth are hung on the walls and form a canopy as the roof. Within the shrine is placed grim abstractions of wood, triangular in shape, without eyes or face, with protruding arms and are placed in horizontal line on a platform of wood. On the ninth day, the sacral pot is immersed in the waters of a river carried by a procession headed by *Bua*. Peasants and nomadic tribal groups worship the *pachedis* essentially as an expression of the divine cosmic energy of the mother goddess and the unified manifestation of the creative and the destructive principles in her person.



Figure 10.1  
Mata-ni-pachedi painting, Gujarat  
Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi



## Technique

Natural materials are used for drawing and dyeing. The artists usually use wooden blocks to first outline the main drawing on the cloth. The black colour is made of rusted iron which is soaked for a week in a sugar solution and a paste of tamarind seeds. This, when mixed with *Harra* (myrobalam) produces black. After the outline is done, the colours are applied with a *kalam*, a bamboo stick with a cotton swab at one end. Traditionally, very fine outlines are drawn with *kalam* (pen) made of bamboo stick, and the spaces are thereafter filled in with different vegetable colours by a brush made of date or palm trees. The base material, usually rough homespun cloth, is made into a canvas by stiffening with chalk, mud and vegetable gum. The painting is done with rock dust, red earth, lime, turmeric and similar natural substances.

Figure 10.2

*Mata-ni-pachedi painting, Gujarat*

Source: National Museum, New Delhi





# Sanjhi







Figure 11.1  
Saighi painting, Punjab  
Source: North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala



## Origin

The unmarried young girls in the villages of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh prepare the image of the goddess, Sanjhi or Jhanjhi deity, worshipped during *Navratri*, the nine day festival following the moonless-*Amavas* day of *Asauj* in September/October. As these paintings are made in the evening, they are coined with the name ‘*Sanjhi*’ or ‘*Sangya*’ or ‘*Chandra Tarayya*’. It’s a group activity, the tradition of singing songs while making the image dates back to many centuries. The Sanjhi deity represents the nine main goddesses of Hindu tradition. They are *Lakshmi*, *Kali*, *Parvati*, *Ambika*, *Vaishnavi*, *Gauri*, *Saraswati*, *Ramba* and *Jagdamba*.

The image is painted on the wall of the house in the village. The Great Mother Goddess Sanjhi is invoked to dwell in her image; her shape is a composition of triangles entirely covered with star-shaped clay discs. They are applied to a coating of mud and cowdung, which is applied to the outer wall of the house. The small clay elements painted white and speckled with orange, blue and yellow cover the triangular shape of the Goddess. Her image is decorated with colourful flower petals and leaves. She is accompanied by the small figure of her brother who brings offerings to her on the eighth of the *Navratri* rites of nine nights, when his image is added to that of the great Goddess.

## Theme

The motifs drawn on the deity are sun-moon, stars and flowers, pots, hand-held fan, dates and peacock. The small Sanjhi has lots of variations, from auspicious symbols like “*Swastika*”, “*Om*”. The young girls also write their names on it. The elaborate painting painted on *poornima* (full moon night) is also known as *kilakot*. For nine days, women and girls offer prayers to the deity. A day before Dussehra a terracotta image signifying ‘a little brother’ comes to take her.

On the morning of Dusshera, she is symbolically ‘fed’ and then taken off the wall. The body is immersed in running water, and prayers are chanted. Her face is preserved. The wall is freshly painted and a lamp is lit at the site. The face is placed in a *matka* or pot and a *diya* or lamp, is lit and placed on it. The women place the pots on their heads and walk to the tank in a procession, singing songs. The men lead the way,





Figure 11.2  
 Sanjhi reliefs moulded in clay on village walls  
 Source : North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala





Figure 11.3  
 Sanjhi reliefs moulded in clay on village walls  
 Source : North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala



clearing the path with sticks. Each woman floats her pot, hoping that it will reach to the other side, signifying victory and achievement. The women then collect grain from every house in the village, and take it to a grocer where they exchange it for sweets. These are distributed equally to everyone in the village. When they return home, the 'little brother' is placed where the Sanjhi *Mata* once was, until the next Dussehra.

At some places, on the tenth day the entire painted relief is removed from the wall that now is painted white and the figure of the peacock is drawn on it, while the remnants of the image are drowned in the village pond.

## Technique

Preparations for the Sanjhi begin a week before Dussehra at the time of sowing the seed and harvesting of crop. Clay, cow dung, terracotta, lime, turmeric, colour and clothes for dressing the goddess are used. A fresh coating of mud and cow dung is applied to an outer wall of the house. Abstract triangles, star and square shaped figures are made with clay and dried. The triangle and square are used to form the body of the *mata* (goddess), which is covered with the stars. Matchsticks with moulded clay are used to make the sunrays. Arms, hands, legs and feet are added and details of the face are moulded to the form. The two arms of the Sanjhi images are invariably upraised. Animals and human forms, horses and riders and male attendant figures surround the head of the goddess. The body of the goddess is formed of jewellery. Clay bracelets and anklets delineate her arms and legs. Clay necklaces can be seen on her neck. Clay jewels cover her head, hands, neck, waist, ears and feet. The waist is accentuated by flair of the skirt which is made of clay discs formed of a zig-zag pattern. The eyes are hollows and most of the times the face is covered with light muslin cloth.

Cowdung is used as an adhesive to paste all the clay pieces together so that the image of goddess is created on the wall.

The Sanjhi Mata or goddess is then dressed in all the finery of the local area. The dress includes the *lehenga* or long skirt, *choli* or blouse, *dupatta* or drape used to cover the body, complete with *ghunghat* or veil, and jewellery. Often a circular pot rest, called an *indhi*, is placed on her head for the water vessel to rest comfortably.



# Chitrakathi Painting





## Origin

Chitrakathi *patas* are from Paithan or Savantvadi or Pinguli and do not go beyond a period of 250 years. Paithan was a hub of literature and art, both in ancient and medieval time. In medieval Maharashtra and some parts of Andhra and Karnataka, there was a section of people known as Chitrakathis. They travelled from village to village and narrated mythological stories to people. With help of these single sheet paintings, mime and puppet shows, they highlighted the principal incidents of the story. All leaves belonging to one story were kept together in a bundle called *pothi*. A pair of paintings, pasted back to back against each other with a stick in the centre for easy handling were shown to the audience while narrator told the story.

There is a series of paintings called Pratisthana paintings created by artisans belonging to the court of the Vijayanagar kings. They are done on thick ivory coloured handmade paper.

There is a striking resemblance between these paintings and Lepakshi murals in Anantpur district of Andhra and to the Tholubommatala, the flat leather shadow puppets. There are two kinds of storytelling paintings in Maharashtra, religious and secular. The religious scrolls are individual hangings like Nathadwara *Pichhvais* and have iconographic importance. The secular ones are continuous or exist in sets and are focussed on entertainment. The religious scrolls are produced, displayed and worshipped during Chaitra Gauri festival for a month and are kept aside till the next year, and hence they are known as Chaitra Gauri *patas*. The secular ones are known as Chitrakathi *patas* and are narrative in nature.







Figure 12.1  
Indrajeet gripping Hanuman with help of Naag, Chitrakathi painting, Maharashtra  
Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi



## Theme

The Chitrakathi *patas* draw their theme from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata or the Puranic legends. They do not necessarily depict the incidents as described in the original Sanskrit texts but draw their inspiration from local oral tradition. One of the popular subjects of painting is the *Pandavapratapa*, a narrative poem based on the Mahabharata composed by Marathi poet Shridhara in 18th century C.E. Other episodes illustrated from the epics are *Abhimanyu Vatsala Harana*, *Rukminiswayamvara*, *Harishchandra-Taramati*, *Lankadahana* and *Ramavijaya*.



Figure 12.3  
Fight between Hanuman and Ravana's son, Akshay Kumar;  
Chitrakathi painting, Maharashtra  
Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi



The Pratisthana paintings are martial in mood replete with male dominated aggression. There are scenes of battle, hunting of savage beasts, and annihilation of destructive female tree spirits and demons.

The performance of Chitrakathi, known as *Katha*, takes place in the market place or the village square or in the house of the local *zamindar*. The show man begins by illustrating the picture of Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles and then Saraswati, the goddess of learning. He sings the songs narrating the storyline of the episodes alongwith display of Chitrakathi *patas*.

## Technique

The most prominent characteristic depicted in these paintings is the vigour and boldness. The figures are stylised with sharp prominent features and have set expressions on the face without any hint of emotion. The mood is conveyed by the posture and position of the arms and legs.

The Chitrakathi *patas* are primarily linear, colours only work as space fillers. Outlines are bold, black and strong. The faces are in profile, the chest shown in front view as are the arms but the legs are again shown in profile view. The forehead is high with a prominent pointed nose. Small curved lines indicate chin and lips. Eyes are shown as large white circle with a prominent central dot in black. Two tiny triangles project sideways from the circle giving the eyes a little elongation. Such eyes are almond shaped. The ears are conventionally drawn like a series of three ringlets. Often a large earring dangles below the ear.

Pratisthana paintings use primary colours, red, blue and yellow. Colours only fill the spaces contained by outlines. Red and Reddish-brown dominate the colour scheme. The colours are mainly used on the body of man and animal, the background is a natural colour wash. Special attention is paid to the drawing of jewellery worn by the main characters and also used to decorate the horses and elephants. The styles of the musical instruments, clothes and jewellery are those popular in Maharashtra in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The paintings are done on a single plane without any depth or geometric precision. The main purpose of these Chitrakathi *patas* is narration, which they do successfully.



Figure 12.2  
Hanuman's tail wrapped with cloth and dipped in oil,  
Chitrakathi painting, Maharashtra  
Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi





# Patachitra of Odisha





## Origin

The Patachitra is the traditional painting of Odisha. The word is derived from Sanskrit word “*pata*” which means canvas and “*chitra*” means picture. This art style is dedicated to Lord Jagannath of Puri.

The traditional offering in a temple is called a *pat*. These icon paintings are painted on wall as well as cotton and tussar cloth. The paintings on cloth are very delicate drawings drawn by the *Mahapatras* and *Moharana* caste groups. The painter is called the *patachitrakar* for whom the painting of a Patachitra is a religious experience as well as a means of satisfying his aesthetic and creative urges. The artists’ colony, known as *chitrakarsati* surrounds the main temple.

Unlike the scroll paintings of Bengal, Rajasthan or South India, the Patachitras of Puri, Kalighat paintings of Bengal and Chitrakathi paintings of Maharashtra are separate pieces of paintings complete in themselves.



Figure 13.3  
Patachitra painting, Odisha  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





Figure 13.1  
 Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra,  
 Patachitra painting, Odisha  
 Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



## Theme

The main idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in the temple are made of wood and they are ceremoniously taken out of the temple every year in *rath-yatra*. The spectacular *rath-yatra* is awe-inspiring and draws thousands of devotees. Immediately before the *rath-yatra*, the wooden idols are to be polished and repaired, therefore these are then replaced by these freshly painted canvases representing the three deities to whom prayers are offered. Patachitras are painted on this theme and sold to pilgrims around the precincts of the temple (Figure 13.1). Most of the Patachitras depict religious themes-*Thia Badhia* (representation of the Jagannath temple), *Krishna Leela* (Jagannath as Krishna demonstrating his childhood feats), *Dasabatara Patti* (the ten incarnations of Vishnu), *Nabagunjara* (a figure comprising of nine different creatures), *Kandarpa-Rath* (cupid's chariot-Krishna on a chariot fully composed of colourfully dressed, playful women), *Ram-Ravana Judha* (war between Ram and Ravana), *Kanchi Abhijana* (expedition against the kingdom of Kanchi), *Ganjpa* (Playing cards), *Panchamukhi* (Five-headed Ganesh), *Kaliya Dalan Vesha* (Krishna representing Sri Jagannath, overpowering the serpent Kaliya in the river Yamuna).

The faces are mostly in profile with elongated eyes, sharp beak-like noses, pointed chin and an elaborate coiffure. There are no landscapes and all the incidents are depicted in close juxtaposition. The background is filled with decorations of flowers and foliage. All paintings have decorative borders. These are individual figures and do not tell a story as seen in Kalamkari paintings.

## Technique

The Patachitras are oblong, stiff and glazed pieces of painting. Painted on cloth, it follows a traditional process of canvas preparation. It is painted with stone colours, shell powders and organic lac on paper or cloth stiffened with tamarind seed and chalk powder. It makes the surface semi-absorbent, gives it tensile strength and smoothness. Unlike Pichhvai paintings, no pencil sketch is made. The borders are the first to be painted. They are of two kinds – floral and geometric. The primary drawing is made with a brush dipped in red or yellow. Next the main flat colours are applied. Later, details like features, ornaments, and textile patterns are picked out with fine black lines in brush. Sometimes



a painting is executed only in black and white. Lastly, lacque is applied to the paintings which gives it gloss. Lacquering also makes the painting strong and water-proof.

The colours are prepared from vegetable extracts, minerals, natural stones and then mixed with glue as a binding medium. Black is obtained from lamp-black, yellow from Haritali stone, red from Hingol stone, white from boiled and filtered powdered conch shell.

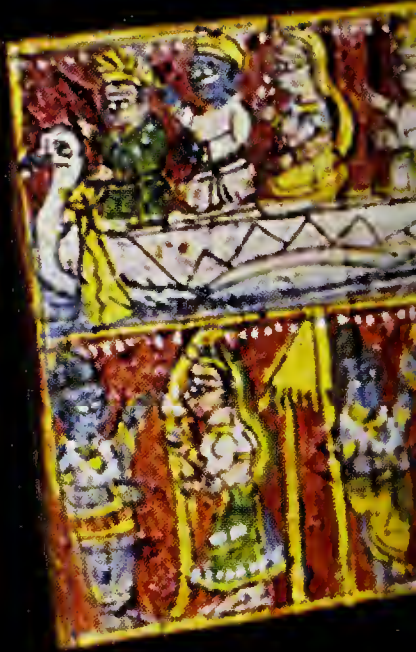
These colours are used to paint the Holy Trinity – Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra of Puri. The Sanskrit synonym of yellow is *Haridra* which means love for Hari. The other synonyms are red is *Rakta* – name of Shiva, black is Krishna, a name of Vishnu and that of white is *Shukla* – the colour of Brahma.

The paint brushes are made from the hair of the deer, goat or squirrel. Gold and silver paint is never used. Details of ornaments and jewellery are always picked out in white.



Figure 13.2  
Palachitra painting, Odisha  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





*Figure 14.1*  
*Kaavad mobile shrine, Rajasthan*  
*Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi*



# Kaavad Mobile Shrine





## Origin

Kaavad is a mobile shrine made of wood with multiple folding doors depicting stories primarily from Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. The story tellers travel from place to place with these shrines and recite sacred stories for their patrons in Rajasthan. The literal meaning of the word 'Kaavad' is half a door or panel of a door, also known as "*Kavaat*", "*Kapaat*" or "*Kivaad*". The shrine consists of many hinged panels that open outwards. The *Kaavadiyas* associate the word "Kaavad" with "that which is carried on the shoulder". The tradition can be traced to Shravan Kumar from the Ramayana who carried his blind parents in two baskets hung on a bamboo pole to various pilgrim spots but was accidentally killed by King Dashrath while fetching water from a stream. Since Shravan was unable to complete the task of taking his parents to all the pilgrimage spots, the *Kaavadiyas* carry on the tradition of bringing the pilgrim spots to the people in the form of the Kaavad shrine.

The tradition of storytelling with the help of Kaavad exists in the rural region of Marwar and Mewar in Rajasthan. It is approximately a 400 year old tradition. The Kaavad makers known as *Suthars* or *Basayatis* reside in Nalla Bazaar in village Bassi, approximately 25 kms from Chittor. The *Suthars* of Bassi call themselves the children of Visvakarma. According to the Hindu tradition, Visvakarma is the chief architect of the Universe, the supreme patron of the arts. He had five sons, one of them being *Maya* the carpenter (*Suthar*), who fathered the carpenter community.

## Theme

Kaavad is not just an artefact, or a painting, or a story, or a performance. It is an amalgam of painting, recitation of genealogies and gesture which together create a complete work of art or an artistic experience.

The *Kaavadiya Bhat* periodically brings the shrine to his *jajman's* (patron's) house to recite his genealogy and to sing praises of his ancestors. It is a combination of narrative and visual imagery. Though the records are written in notebooks, the recitation is oral and the notebooks are never revealed to the patrons. Patrons are considered as belonging to the narrators, and each storyteller or *Kaavadiya Bhat* inherits a number of patrons from his father upon the latter's retirement. The profession is confined to men. The patron becomes a part and parcel of the 'Sacred Space' by virtue of being a painted part of it.





Figure 14.2  
 Kaavadi painted wood shrine showing narratives  
 from Bhagavata Purana, Rajasthan  
 Source: National Museum, New Delhi



*Kaavadiya Bhat* – the wandering priests - narrate epics while pointing to the appropriate illustrations on the *Kaavad* with a peacock feather. The story unfolds with the opening of doors in various phases and the *darshan* or glimpse of the deity i.e. Ram, Lakshman and Sita with the opening of the last door. Not only *avatars* of Vishnu i.e. Lord Rama and Krishna are to be seen in Kaavads but also group of saints who rebelled against rituals and caste distinctions such as Kabir, Meera and Narsinh Mehta. The Kaavad recitation takes place at the demise of patron's dear or near ones or when the patron needs to make a wish, or celebrate the birth of a child or offer their gratitude for the fulfilment of a wish. It is believed that listening to stories purifies the soul and reserves a place of entry for the devotee in heaven.

## Technique

The *Suthars* have developed dual skills of carpentry and painting. Work is shared between the family members. The men undertake the artistic work of painting and carpentry while the women prepare the colours and give finishing touches. The Kaavad is made of medium soft, low density wood-usually *adusal*, *meetha neem*, or *salar* – the crevices are filled with mixture of adhesive and sawdust. The object is then dried and sanded and coated with *khaddi*, a type of soil found in Bhilwara district, which acts as a primer and gives the object a shell white hue.

Traditionally, the Kaavad was painted with mineral colours, ground and mixed with wood, glue and then with water. The basic colours were *hinglu* (red), *piyawadi* (yellow), *hara* (green), *neel* (blue), *suffad* (white), and *syahi* (black). They were mixed into a paste and stored in coconut shells. The brushes were handmade using squirrel hair.

The artist at first draws the face, the limbs, clothes, ornaments and eyes. The last finishing touch is the black outline after which the image slowly emerges from a mass of flat colours.



Figure 14.3  
Kaavad mobile shrine, Rajasthan  
Source: CCRT Archives,  
New Delhi



# Phad Painting





## Origin

Phad is a colourful folk painting of Rajasthan, depicted in horizontal scrolls and painted on cloth. The Phad painting scrolls depict the glory of Rajput folk leaders like Dev Narayanji, Pabuji and Ramdevji who are greatly revered and worshipped by Rabari and Gujjar tribe's throughout rural Rajasthan as folk deities. The people belonging to Rabari and Gujjar tribe earn their living by tending and breeding cattle. The folk hero, Pabuji Rathor sacrificed his life to protect their cattle and thus became deified as their personal god. He also protected the rights of widows. This art form originated in Mewar region. The main centres of Phad painting are in the Bhilwara region, Shahpura, Raipur and Chittorgarh.

Travelling story-tellers (*bhopas*) use Phad *chitra* as a backdrop for telling Pabuji's and Dev Narayan's heroic deeds (*veer gatha*), local heroes who lived in and around 14th century C.E. The disciples of Pabuji, who believe in his divine powers, commission the recital by these *bhopas* when there is sickness or trouble in the family. They believe that the mystical power of the painting, if displayed and worshipped in their dwellings, would remove all evil influences. This art form is close to 700 years' old. During the reign of Rana Sanga, the barracks or camps for army witnessed such *veer gathas* to increase will power and moral support.

Phad is a synthesis of art, music and dance. It is a night long performance. The *bhopas* carry a lamp and move from one panel of painting to another while singing and dancing and narrating the *veer gatha*. The *bhopas* recite Pabuji Phad along with Ravanhattha, a musical instrument and use Jantar, *vina* like instrument, to accompany the recitation of the Dev Narayan Phad. All of its events are recounted within a single pictorial frame. The entire painting is divided into sections and the figures are two dimensional.

## Theme

The Dev Narayan Phad, Pabuji Phad and Ramdevji Phad differs from each other with respect to theme and story content. But each type has its set traditional composition and painter rigidly follows it, as the visual content of his Phad should necessarily correlate the narrative content of folk epic sung by the *bhopa*. Even if we see the Phad of century apart there is hardly any change over such a long span in the format, composition and stylistic features.





Figure 15.2  
 Extract from Phad painting, Rajasthan  
 Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



The story centres around the theme that the territory of Rabari tribe was encroached by Bundelas, another tribe for grazing of cattle and valiant Pabuji came to their rescue. In return the people gifted Pabuji a black mare who would neigh and alert him whenever they were in trouble. These deified heroes are also known as *bhomiya*s in reverence of whom memorial stones are also erected which over a period have turned into shrines. These folk heroes were not empowered with supernatural powers but were valiant and chivalrous warriors who protected their tribesmen. Their stories are inspirational and motivate the people to follow the righteous path. Each one of them i.e. Pabuji, Ramdevji and Dev Narayan are worshipped as *ishta devata* of a particular community. Pabuji is the tutelary deity of the Rabaris who are camel herders. They



Figure 15.1  
Phad painting, Rajasthan, Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



credit Pabuji with bringing camels to Rajasthan and believe that the recitation of the Pabuji epic can cure camels of their diseases. Dev Narayan is the tutelary deity of the Gujars, traditionally cowherds. Ramdevji, one of the most popular folk deities of western India is the *ishta-devata* of the leather working Meghwals and Regars.

One way of showing reverence to these deities was by sponsoring a *phad banchana* or a reading of their Phad. The scroll is treated like a mobile shrine. When it is unrolled for a performance, the ground on which it is to be displayed is sanctified. A cloth is laid at the central deity's feet, lamps are lit and conches are blown in the *arati*. Offerings are made to the central image from time to time throughout the performance. Even when the scroll is not in use, the *bhopa* must offer incense to it everyday.

In Phad painting, the stories of heroes in history such as Goga Chauhan, Prithviraj Chauhan, Amar Singh Rathor, Tejaji, and others are common.

## Technique

The Phad painter always prefers the cloth of *Khadi* or *Reja*, the handspun and handwoven coarse cloth as the base for his rectangular scroll paintings. The primer *Kalap* is prepared either out of the flour of coarse wheat or barley which is mixed with water and gum and boiled. This primer is applied to the cloth which is then rubbed with a smooth stone to make it smooth and shining. The colours are prepared with powdered minerals and semi precious stones mixed with tree gum, which give a dazzling brilliance and permanency to the painting. Powdered earthen colours, water, gum and indigo are also used. The colours are prepared by the women artisans while the process of starching the scroll and *kheriya gond* (indigenous glue) and *ghotana* (burnishing) is done by men.

The illustrations of the story are arranged horizontally. The painter first prepares a rough outline of the traditional composition in a light yellow colour. When this rough sketch is ready with clear division of the composition into sections and subsections, he fills up the areas with vibrant colours. He uses one colour at a time and fills up all the areas to be covered with that one particular colour.

Always facing right the hero is drawn in the centre of the painting. Pabuji Rathore and his black horse, Kasar Kalini tower over the rest of



the figures (Figure 15.1). Around him are depicted various incidents, not necessarily linear, but following their own pattern according to the tale. Ornate borders, creepers, trees, rivers divide various sections. Orange is used for limbs and bare human figures, yellow for the ornaments or the patterns of the clothes, blue for the water and green for the trees. Predominantly red is generally used in the dresses of the principal characters and the main border enclosing the painting. The final ceremony on completion of Phad is performed by painting the pupil in the eye of the Dev Narayan signifying the breathing of life into the god's figure.

In its scale and format, the Phad resembles the Iranian *parda*, a horizontal cloth scroll about 5 feet high used in the recitation of stories of heroes, such as the martyrdom of Hasan and Hussein. All Phads are immense: the Ramdevji Phad is about five feet in length, the Pabuji Phad is 17 feet long and the Dev Narayan Phad is almost 35 feet long. The Phad depicts palaces, each of which shows a king seated with his courtiers. Adversaries are at the edges, and the principal enemy is generally shown at the right edge of the scroll. However, the figure of the central deity is in profile, its gaze is not facing the devotee, it looks towards the other figures on the scroll. Worn out scrolls are ritually immersed in water of holy river, lake or well.



# Patua Scroll Painting





## Origin

In Bengal, the word '*Pata*' signifies picture painted on cloth or paper. From this word '*pata*' has emerged the word '*patua*' (painter). The *patuas* or *chitrakars* hold a priest-like status in the Santhal community – they play an important role at the time of birth, death and marriage – and are given offerings to pray for the occasion. The *patuas* are also accomplished singers, they go from village to village to display the scrolls along with narration of folktales. In the villages of 24 Parganas, Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan located in West Bengal, one still meets the '*patuas*' selling their '*pats*' – literally small squared up illustrations – at village fairs, or entertaining the villagers with their '*jarano pats*', literally rolled paintings.

Patua painting, or the patachitra from West Bengal, are narrative scrolls painted in vertical panels describing traditional tales from the epics, Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata or local tradition, such as the culture of the snake goddess, Manasa or the great Bengali Vaishnava saint, Sri Chaitanya, and secular themes. The characters are visualized in natural surroundings, a palace or a settlement. The secular patachitra make a record of the important social, political and natural events. Thus patua carries new information and opinions to the people.



Figure 16.1  
Patua scroll painting, West Bengal  
Source: National Museum, New Delhi



## Theme

Figure 16.2 illustrates certain episodes of the great Hindu epic Ramayana, which narrates the story by Valmiki about the virtues of an ideal king, Lord Rama. The top most panel shows Hanuman and Sita in *Ashok Vatika* followed by other scenes depicting Hanuman and Sita's plight as a captive in Ravana's *Ashok Vatika*. The human figures occupy a large area of the canvas, which leaves little scope for more detailing. The anatomical details of figures are not very clear in the spontaneous lines drawn by *patuas*. The scenes have largeness in conception, demarcated by a prominent border, which have to be viewed from a greater distance than is usual for looking at miniatures and manuscript paintings. Some of the *patas* of Murshidabad depict battles between Bali and Sugriva, and Ram and Ravana.

The painting (Figure 16.3) depicts a protected feudal aristocracy. It also shows a glimpse of a class which was developing European tastes with the arrival of the British.







Figure 16.2  
 Episodes from Ramayana  
 Patua scroll painting  
 West Bengal  
 Source: National Museum, New Delhi





Figure 16.3  
 Patua scroll painting, West Bengal  
 Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



## Technique

There are three types of formats in patachitras—the vertical scroll (*dighal pat*), horizontal scroll (*jorano pat*) and a single quadrangular sheet (*chauka pat*). *Patas* were originally on long stretches of coarsely woven cotton cloth. A fine coating of clay mixed with cow-dung was applied on the scroll to smoothen the surface and seal the pores of the cloth. When dry the surface was rubbed for making it even and thus ready to receive the paints. Later on paper was used. The ‘*jorano pats*’ are sometimes painted on paper of the cheapest variety, even old newspapers – on an average 12-15 feet in length and are 1-2 feet wide.

The limited palette of earth colours of the *patas* are pure and bright. The five primary colours used included *Sveta* (white), *Pita* (yellow), *Krishna* (lamp-black), *Haritala* (green-brown), and *Rakta* (red). For embellishment gold leaf or powdered gold leaf and silver leaf are used. The blue to be used for Krishna’s face is vivid indigo. For fixing the paints they are often mixed with tamarind pulp or barley paste.



# Kalighat Painting







Figure 17.2  
Goddess Lakshmi and Saraswati, Kalighat painting, West Bengal  
Source: Kalighat Patas, B. N. Mukherjee



Figure 17.3  
Lord Ram and Krishna, Kalighat painting, West Bengal  
Source: Kalighat Patas, B. N. Mukherjee

## Origin

Kalighat painting is done with water colour on mill-made paper primarily by scroll painters-cum-potters (*chitrakars*, *patuas*, *patidars*), who had migrated between the 18th-19th century C.E. from the districts of Bengal (Midnapur, 24 Parganas, Nadia, Birbhum, Bankura, Purulia, Murshidabad etc) to the city of Kolkata. These *patuas* set up their shop-studios chiefly around the Kalighat temple, where goddess Kali is worshipped by thousands of pilgrims every year. This is how they came to be called 'Kalighat paintings'. They were painted on cheap paper and sold as icons at the Kali temple to the pilgrims and visitors. Besides *patuas*, several other traditional practitioners of arts and crafts, such as *sutradhar*-carpenters, *bhaskara*-stone workers, and *kumahar*-potters, were also active in the field.



The religious figures painted in Kalighat paintings have certain common features i.e. frontal postures, their gaze directed at the devotees and total absence of any background. Their emergence as unified cultic images combined with the three-dimensional aspect, clearly demarcate the influence of painted clay figures. They were not meant for storytelling or a part of a narrative. Each painting was complete in itself representing a single or compounded image. Apart from these religious and secular themes, the *patuas* also painted animals with great care and love. The famous painting (Figure 17.1) depicts a snake with a fish in its mouth.

### Theme

The theme of the Kalighat paintings revolved around daily life or social or religious events, as well as gods and goddesses. The subjects painted by the Kalighat artists were Kali, Krishna-Radha, Krishna-Balarama, Kartikeya, Ganesha-Janani, Durga, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Ganesha, Mahadeva among others. Apart from religious themes, there were a large number of paintings on fruits, flowers, animals etc. The painting (Figure 17.2) depicts Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and Sarasvati, the goddess of learning – the two daughters of Durga – standing in frontal postures in *tribhanga* pose and cross-legged on mats or conceptualised lotuses. Lakshmi is holding a flower (*padma*) and Sarasvati a musical instrument (*vina*). They wear sarees and are fully ornamented.

The next painting (Figure 17.3) depicts a six-armed male standing in frontal posture cross-legged on a circular mat or a conceptualised representation of a lotus in the posture of *tribhanga*. The two upper most arms and hands are holding an arrow and a bow, symbolizing Rama, the epic hero as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The two dark coloured arms and hands represent those of Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna, with the hands holding a flute. The lowermost hands in yellow colour hold a water-pot (*kamandal*) and an ascetic's spiral stick. The face of the figure bearing an auspicious mark on the forehead and a head-dress is that of female, representing Radha, Krishna's lady love.

Kalighat painters (*patuas*) had once been scroll painters and *kumahars* (potters), which determined the character of the Kalighat style. Two definite characteristics emerged over a period of time - exaggerated rotundity of faces and limbs achieved through delineated curves and use of isolated single images or 2-3 of them in a group emerging as a cut out in contrast to busy background. The use of watercolour made it



possible to have graduated hues leading to discovery of shade and light, luminosity and accentuation of the contours that gave volume to the figures.

## Technique

Kalighat paintings are essentially water colour and brush drawings created with 'dab' technique. The colours are applied to the surface with a piece of crumpled rag or a coarse brush in such a way that the colour forms asymmetrical dabs. After the colour thus applied has dried, the accentuated parts of the body are highlighted with a contour line, generally black, but sometimes in silver colour obtained from tin. The technique used is to first make a pencil drawing and then the face. After this, the exposed limbs of a figure were coloured, one colour at a time. The final outlines and fine details were completed at the end.

The chief characteristic of these paintings was the use of shading and lining the contours in such a way as not to add depth to the painting but to add volume by making it look three-dimensional in character. The layering feature also added volume to the figures. They appear detached from the background and are large in dimensions with bold lines and blank backgrounds. The most commonly used colours were green, red, yellow and blue. The colour red was obtained from lead, yellow from arsenic, green from indigo and black from lampblack or charred paddy or coconut shell. These substances were mixed with paste obtained from boiled *bela* or tamarind seeds. A paste of lime or chalk was applied on the paper after which the *pat* was ready for painting.

The painting (Figure 17.4) depicts child Krishna in a kneeling or half-crawling posture. He is fully ornamented, and has a head-dress, a girdle on a piece of cloth and a long embroidered cloth hanging from the shoulders and resting on the back. This regalia indicates the majesty of the child deity.

Interestingly, Kalighat paintings show western influence in many ways such as depicting Hindu gods wearing shoes. Many paintings also depicted social scandals and current news embellished with especially composed songs. The paintings were based on religious themes and depicted caricatures and portraits of the elite society (*babu* culture).





Figure 17.4  
Child Krishna, Kalighat painting, West Bengal  
Source : Kalighat Patas, B. N. Mukherjee





*Figure 17.1*  
*Snake with a fish in its mouth, Kalighat painting, West Bengal*  
*Source: GCRF Archives, New Delhi*





# Kalamkari





## Origin

The word 'Kalamkari' is derived from Urdu word (*qalam*) and Persian '*Kalam*' which means pen and '*Kari*', which means artistic work. It is an art of decorating handloom fabric with natural dyes by a twig given the shape of a pen. It is practised by artists belonging to various communities mainly from two districts of Andhra Pradesh, namely, Srikalahasti of Chittoor district and Masulipatnam of Krishna district.

It is believed that the painted or printed fabrics were prevalent during the Indus Valley Civilization, before the advent of Christ. The archaeological evidences tell us that the hand painted/printed with resists-dyed cloth was discovered in the 8th century C.E. The popularity of this art was found in the old writings of the French traveller, Francois Bernier.

This art flourished during the Mughal period and in 16th and 17th centuries, the items made by them were *kanat* or tent covers used during encampments, prayer mats etc. The hub of this art form was Golconda region, Chennai and Masulipatnam. As Golconda was under Muslim rule the artistic designs produced in Masulipatnam catered to Persian tastes. As Srikalahasti was under Hindu rulers, it flourished directly under the patronage of temples, and figures were drawn exclusively to narrate mythological stories.



Figure 18.1  
Kalamkari painting, Andhra Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



The items made with Kalamkari fabric, such as bed covers, linen and clothing for men and women, were exported to Europe and Iran since 15th or 16th century. Kalamkari was known to the European merchants i.e. Portuguese as *pintado*, the Dutch *sitz*, and the British *chintz*. In the 19th century the pen was replaced by block-printing.

## Theme

The Kalamkari paintings are more broad-based and encompassing than other traditional fabric paintings like Pichhvais of Nathadwara, Mata ni Pachedi of Gujarat, which have only one central figure and theme. In Kalamkari paintings of Srikalahasti the scenes from Ramayana and Mahabharata are depicted in a row with a narrative written beneath it. Some paintings describe a single episode and some an entire epic like *Sampoorna Ramayana*. Some of the paintings depict local epics such as the *Katamaraju Katha*, in other words, narrative genealogy of the Gollas, and Katama Raju is the epic's hero, the caste champion. The paintings are not just religious, moral and spiritual in character but also a means of recording social events. Equally prominent are the motifs based on flora and fauna, especially the 'Tree of Life' – the tree shelters birds and the handloom weavers alike.

In Kalahasti, the style of drawing on the fabric is characterised by bold, black, angular lines inspired by the murals from temples such as Veerabhadraswamy temple, 16th century C.E., Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh. The cloth is used as a canopy or backdrop in temples. In Masulipatnam, the majority of fabrics are meant for clothing, prayer mats, bed spreads, tapestry and hangings. A variety of motifs used for these fabrics range from stylized plants, creepers, geometric designs to animals and human figures.

## Technique

A distinctive feature of Kalamkari is the use of vegetable colours by the artist. Unlike other paintings, which use emulsifiers and binders, Kalamkari paintings on cloth are produced by the application of dyes extracted from natural sources like roots, leaves, flowers and fruits. In Srikalahasti, the cloth is directly painted on with the pen made from bamboo sticks with felt wrapped to it. In Masulipatnam, the intricate lines of pen are transferred onto wooden blocks and finally get printed on the cloth surface. The cloth is produced in a manner where the block makers, washer people and printers work under the same roof.



In Srikalahasti, it is still the family that engages in the entire process. In Srikalahasti, the solution for line drawings is locally called as *kasim*, which is made by adding sugarcane jaggery, palm jaggery and rusted iron into water. The solution is kept for around 21 days before using. The pen made of trimmed bamboo stick and wrapped with a piece of cotton cloth tied with thread thoroughly is dipped into *kasim*, squeezed and used for drawing over the cloth surface. For yellow, dust of ripe myrobalan fruit, mixed with alum solution is used, for blue indigo is used and red was derived from the *chay* root found in the sandy soils.

In Masulipatnam, a cross-section of teak wood is generally used for the blocks and the artisans are mostly from the carpenter's community. The wood surface is coated with white solution and then the design is transferred onto it. Blocks are carved into by a relief process, where the positive area (the area of printing) is raised and the negative area is sunk. For printing, black and red are printed first and then the cloth is washed and boiled. The areas which are not to be painted with black and red are covered with wax. While boiling, leaves from the local forest (known as *gaja*) are added to the water to fix the colour in the cloths. After boiling they are dried and again sent for further printing. After printing with the other colours such as yellow, blue, etc. the cloth is again washed in boiled water and finally the finishing touches are given by hand.



Figure 13.2  
Kalamkari painting, Andhra Pradesh  
Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi



# Pichhvai





Figure 19.1  
Pichwai painting, Rajasthan, Source: CCRT Archives, New Delhi





## Origin

The word 'Pichhvai' literally means 'at the back'. Pichhvai paintings are done on cloth and serve as painted backdrops for installed icons of Shrinathji at Nathadwara in Rajasthan. Nathadwara is a small pilgrim town in Udaipur. The word 'Nathadwara' means Gateway to the Lord. His image, a black stone figure, appeared in the centre of the painting. The face is featureless except for massive silver lotus eyes that draws the attention of the worshippers. In the background is a brilliant orange hue filled with energy of exploding sunlight. The deity in the painted cloths is adorned with colours, flowers and ornaments of the seasons—changing with the cyclic movement of nature. They are usually done in deep shades of blue and green since these represent the hues of Lord Krishna. Then they are touched with gold. These paintings are considered a religious service offered to the temple, thus imparting a special quality and value to original Pichhvais.

Wall paintings in old *havelis*, homes of the nobility in the Shekhawati region, are a source of inspiration for this craft to be reproduced on public monuments and the walls of the art-conscious. The art of Pichhvais is 250 years old. They are created by members of the Adi Gaud caste.

## Theme

There are three different types of Pichhvais—those made for specific festivals (celebrating the life of Krishna); those made for specific seasons (monsoon and winter); and those which express general themes not necessarily linked to Shrinathji. There are pichhvais inspired by the festival of *Sharad Purnima* (the *Maharasa Lila* pichhvai, *Figure 19.2*), *Govardhan Dhanna* (the Mount Govardhan pichhvai), and *Varsha* (the Varsha pichhvai). The *Maharasa Lila* is a circular dance of Krishna with the *gopis* (milkmaids) in which each *gopi* visualizes herself with Krishna, as if he were dancing with her. The *Rasa Lila* dance is re-enacted in towns and villages throughout Rajasthan and Gujarat in October during the festival of *Navaratri*, nine nights. The *garba* dance involves hundreds or even thousands of people dancing in concentric circles till early hours of the morning. The lifting of Mount Govardhan on his finger by Lord Krishna to shelter the cowherds' families and their animals for



seven days from torrential rain is depicted in the Mount Govardhan pichhvai. The monsoon pichhvais are either known as either *Morakuti* or *Varsha*. *Morakuti* is a small village in Vraj near Barsana, the legendary home of Radha. It was there that Krishna danced like a peacock (*mora*) and enchanted his beloved Radha. The *Morakuti* pichhvai is filled with dancing peacocks.

### Technique

Pichhvai paintings are done on similar lines as that of miniature painting. The first part of the drawing process for any pichhvai painting is the initial spacing of the image known as the *khaka jamana*. The term *khaka* refers to the template which craftsmen often use to compose an image. The spacing of the image is made with a pair of compasses, a *konia* (setsquare) and a straight edge. Lines are marked by string, dusted with blue or black powder. The string is pulled tight across the cloth and then plucked to leave a straight line. This leaves a guideline, which is later strengthened with a straight edge. The larger circles are also made with the string attached to a central point. The central point of the painting passes through the heart, *chakra*, of the central figure of Shrinathji, who stands in the flautist *tribhanga* posture. The deity is centrally placed with the left hand held aloft as if supporting something. As a representation of Krishna, he is painted in an indigo blue colour, wears a turban with a blue peacock feather, a lot of jewellery, and a long *vanamala* that reaches far below the waist.

The yellow pigment *goguli* or *svarna* (gold), *hinglu* or cinnabar, the native red sulphide of mercury and other metals like *ranga* (tin), *tamra* (copper), *raupya* (silver), *yasada* (zinc), *loha* (iron) and *naga* (lead) are virtually the base from which all the traditional pigments are derived. Normally water colour is used for painting and colours are obtained either from natural, stone or vegetable products. There are two kinds of brushes, one is the colour filling brush which is round tipped with straight hairs from a mongoose. The second type of brush is made from squirrel-hair, which is used for detailed and intricate work.



Figure 19.2  
*Maharasa Lila, Pichhvai*  
 Source: Crafts Museum, New Delhi









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*The living traditions mapped in this book are community traditions which are hereditary and are passed on from one generation to the next. However, an attempt has been made to list some known artists:-*

### **Artists of Pithora Painting**

Shri Mansingh Dhanji Rathwa, Malaja village, Vadodara district, Gujarat

Shri Chiliya Hamir Rathwa, Rangpur village, Anand district, Gujarat

Shri Pema Fatiya, Bhabra village, Alirajpur district, Gujarat

Shri Kanti Rathwa, Vankadia village, Panchmahal district, Gujarat

Shri Devi Singh, Dehrikheda village, Alirajpur district, Gujarat

### **Artists of Gond Painting**

Shri Shambhu Dayal Shyam, House No. 378, Banganga, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Shri Bhajju Shyam, Patangarh village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh

Smt. Chandrakali Vyam, Patangarh village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh

Ms. Japani Shyam, Patangarh village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh

Smt. Nankusia Shyam, Patangarh village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh

Shri Narmada Prasad Tekam, Patangarh village, Mandla district, Madhya Pradesh

Shri Sukhnandi Vyam, Sonpuri village, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

### **Artists of Warli Painting**

Shri Bhiku Barakya Jhop, Raytali village, Thane district, Maharashtra

Shri Mayur N. Vayeda, Ganjad village, Palghar district, Maharashtra

Shri Chintu Radaka Rajad, Raytali village, Thane district, Maharashtra

Shri Dhaku Vitthal Kadu, Raytali village, Thane district, Maharashtra

Shri Jivya Soma Mashe, Ganjad village, Thane district, Maharashtra

Smt. Minakshi Vasudev Vayeda, Ganjad village, Thane district, Maharashtra

Shri Gopal Batawar, Ambazari village, Nagpur district, Maharashtra

### **Artists of Saura Pictograph**

Shri Jitendra Dalabehera, Rejidisingi village, Gajapati district, Odisha

Shri Erendu Gamango, Seragad village, Ganjam district, Odisha

Shri Jogi Soboro, Nuagaon village, Ganjam district, Odisha

Smt Rasna Puiya, Seranga village, Ganjam district, Odisha



Smt Sakuntala Sabar, Antarjholi village, Ganjam district, Odisha  
Smt Tumba Sabar, Soarasinghpur village, Ganjam district, Odisha  
Smt Sebatl Sabar, Antarjholi village, Ganjam district, Odisha

### Artists of Santhal Painting

Monimala Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Swarna Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Rani Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Gurupada Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Ananda Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Dukhushyam Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal  
Manu Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Medinipur district,  
West Bengal

### Artists of Cherial Scroll Painting

Shri D Pawan Kumar, Badangpet village, Rangareddy district,  
Andhra Pradesh  
Shri D Naageshwar, Cherial village, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh  
Smt Vanaja, Cherial village, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh  
Shri Chandriah, Cherial village, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh  
Shri D Vaikuntam, Cherial village, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh  
Shri Nagilla Ganesh, Cherial village, Warangal district, Andhra Pradesh

### Artists of Ganjifa (Handpainted Playing Cards)

Shri Sudhir Kumar Maharana, Sasan Padia, Old Town village,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha  
Shri Banamali Mahapatra, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Appana Mahapatro, Chikiti village, Ganjam district, Odisha  
Shri Prakash Chandra Mahapatro, Parlakhemundi village,  
Gajapati district, Odisha  
Shri Sital Fouzdar, Bishnupur village, South 24 Parganas district,  
West Bengal  
Shri Kanekar, Sawantwadi village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Shri Bansori Fouzdar, Bishnupur village, South 24 Parganas district,  
West Bengal



### Artists of Madhubani Painting

Smt. Baua Devi, Jitwarpur village, Madhubani district, Bihar  
Smt. Karpuri Devi, Jitwarpur village, Madhubani district, Bihar  
Smt. Mahasundari Devi, Jitwarpur village, Madhubani district, Bihar  
Smt. Sunita Jha, Tarauni village, Darbhanga district, Bihar  
Shri Upendra Shah, Laheriya Ganj village, Madhubani district, Bihar  
Shri Chandra Bhushan Kumar, Rasidpur village, Begusarai district, Bihar  
Ms. Subhadra Devi, Salempur village, Gopalganj district, Bihar

### Artists of Mata ni pachedi

Shri Chandrakantbhai Bhulabhai Chitara, Vasna village, Ahmedabad, Gujarat  
Shri Shyambhai Bhikhabhai Chunara, Mirzapur village, Ahmedabad, Gujarat  
Shri Sanjay Manubhai Chitara, Jivraj Park village, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

### Artists of Sanjhi Painting

Shri V P Verma, 551, Sector 5, Kurukshetra, Haryana  
Shri Bhup Singh Gulia, 566, Sector 14, Rohtak, Haryana  
Ms Anita Gupta, 1207, Sector 44-B, Chandigarh, Haryana  
Shri Sukhpal Singh, B 49/146, Guru Nanak Nagar, Jhill Road, Tripri village, Patiala, Punjab  
Shri Anil Kumar Silyan, 29, Street no. 3, Mahindra College Colony, Patiala, Punjab

### Artists of Chitrakathi Painting

Shri Ganpat Masage, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Parshuram Vishram Gangawane, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Eknath Parshuram Gangawane, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Chetan Parshuram Gangawane, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Sakharam Mahadeo Gangawane, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Suresh Nana Ransingh, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra  
Pravin Ashok Gangawane, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra



Sudha Suresh Ransingh, Pinguli village, Sindhudurg district,  
Maharashtra

### **Artists of Patachitra (Odisha)**

Dr. Jagannath Mahapatra, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Niranjana Moharana, Dandasahi village, Kandhamal district,  
Odisha  
Shri Prahallad Moharana, Satsankha village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Kanta Satapati, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Rabindranath Sahoo, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Narayan Das, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha  
Shri Sushanta Sharangi, Raghurajpur village, Puri, Odisha

### **Artists of Kaavad Mobile Shrine**

Shri Abrar Mohammad Shah, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Dwarka Prasad Jangid, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Ghanshyam Suthar, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Mangilal Kheradi, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Mangilal Mistri, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Mohammad Ibrahim, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Satya, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Satyanarayan Suthar, Bassi village, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan

### **Artists of Phad Painting**

Shri Vijay Joshi, Jheel village, Dhaulpur district, Rajasthan  
Shri Shanti Lal Joshi, Jheel village, Dhaulpur district, Rajasthan  
Shri Ram Gopal Joshi, Kumbha Nagar, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan  
Shri Shree Lal Joshi, Bhimganj village, Bhilwara district, Rajasthan  
Shri Rajesh Soni, 92, Gangaur Ghat Marg, Jagdish Chowk,  
Udaipur, Rajasthan  
Shri Subodh Kumar Joshi, Govt. Girls Mahavidyalaya village,  
Bhilwara district, Rajasthan  
Shri Nand Kishore Joshi, Shastri Nagar, Bhilwara district, Rajasthan

### **Artists of Patua Scroll Painting**

Shri Ranjit Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district,  
West Bengal  
Shri Gurupada Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district,  
West Bengal  
Shri Bappa Chitrakar, Habi Chak village, Purba Midnapur district,  
West Bengal



Shri Nanigopal Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district,  
West Bengal

Shri Noordin Chitrakar, Habi Chak village, Purba Midnapur district,  
West Bengal

Shri Anwar Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district,  
West Bengal

### **Artists of Kalighat Painting**

Kalam Patua, Chandpara village, 24 Parganas North district,  
West Bengal

Yakub Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district, West Bengal

Bhaskar Chitrakar, Patuapara village, Howrah district, West Bengal

Anwar Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district, West Bengal

Suman Chitrakar, Daspur village, Paschim Midnapur district,  
West Bengal

Bipasa Patua, Gokarna village, Murshidabad district, West Bengal

Uttam Chitrakar, Naya village, Paschim Midnapur district, West Bengal

### **Artists of Kalamkari**

Shri C Subramanyam, Srikalahasti village, Chittoor district,  
Andhra Pradesh

Shri Ramchandriah, Srikalahasti village, Chittoor district,  
Andhra Pradesh

Shri M Viswanath Reddy, Srikalahasti village, Chittoor district,  
Andhra Pradesh

Shri Theerthan Murali, Srikalahasti village, Chittoor district,  
Andhra Pradesh

Shri Vasantbhai Manubhai Chitara, Vasna village, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Shri Chandrakant Bhulabhai Chitara, Vasna village, Ahmedabad,  
Gujarat

### **Artists of Pichhvai Painting**

Shri Shankar P Sharma, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district,  
Rajasthan

Shri Mohan Lal G Sharma, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district,  
Rajasthan

Shri Parmanand S Sharma, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district,  
Rajasthan

Shri Dev Krishna, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district, Rajasthan

Shri Kanhaiya Lal, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district, Rajasthan

Shri Raghunandan Sharma, Nathdwara village, Rajsamand district,  
Rajasthan



Institutions that can be tapped for further reading:

Bharat Bhavan  
J. Swaminathan Marg  
Shamla Hills  
Bhopal 462 002  
Madhya Pradesh

Bharat Kala Bhawan  
Banaras Hindu University  
Varanasi-221005  
Uttar Pradesh

Bharatiya Kala Kendras  
in Delhi and other major cities

Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India Ltd.  
Jawahar Vyapar Bhawan, Janpath  
New Delhi- 110001

Centre for Folk Culture Studies  
University of Hyderabad  
Prof. C.R. Rao Road  
Gachibowli  
Hyderabad-500046

Craft Revival Trust (CRT)  
1/1 Khirki Village  
Malviya Nagar  
New Delhi-110017

Dakshinchitra  
East Coast Road  
Muttukadu  
Chengalpet  
Tamil Nadu-603118

Dastkar  
45B, Shahpur Jat  
New Delhi-110049

Government Museum  
Egmore, Chennai-600008  
Tamil Nadu



Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation of India Ltd.  
(HHEC)  
Udhyog Marg, Sector 8  
Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301

Indian Museum  
27 Jawahar Lal Nehru Road  
Kolkata-700016

Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA)  
C.V. Mess  
Janpath  
New Delhi-110011

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)  
71, Lodi Estate  
New Delhi-110003

Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS)  
(National Museum of Mankind)  
Wellington House  
Irwin Road, Lashkar Mohalla  
Mysore  
Karnataka

Lalit Kala Akademi  
Rabindra Bhavan  
35, Ferozeshah Road  
New Delhi-110001

National Book Trust (NBT)  
Nehru Bhawan  
5, Institutional Area, Phase II  
Vasant Kunj  
New Delhi -110070

National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)  
Sri Aurobindo Marg  
New Delhi-110016

National Handicrafts and Handlooms Museum (Crafts Museum)  
Pragati Maidan  
Bhairon Road  
New Delhi-110001



National Institute of Design (NID)

Paldi

Ahmedabad 380007

Gujarat

National Museum

(Ministry of Culture, Government of India)

Janpath

New Delhi-110011

Sanskriti Museum

Anandagram

Mehrauli Gurgaon Road

New Delhi-110047















*Living traditions are an essential and a visible determinant of a country's cultural identity. An average Indian is conditioned both by participation and observation from a young age into many traditional art forms, figures and ritual drawings. CCRT is in the forefront to promote and disseminate knowledge about Indian Art and Culture. It is important for young people to grow up with an understanding for their own culture as that of others. The present book aims to create an awareness and appreciation about the rich living traditions of tribal and folk paintings of India. India has a myriad painting traditions. Of these some well known ones have been covered. To name a few, Chitrakathi of Maharashtra, Phad tradition of Rajasthan, Jadupatua tradition of Bengal and Bihar are based on narrative traditions as evident from the storyteller's scrolls. Nathdwara painting of Rajasthan, Patachitras of Odisha, Kalighat of West Bengal and Mata-ni-pachedi of Gujarat are linked to a central deity and faith. These paintings are embedded with aesthetic, spiritual, ecological, social as well as recreational value. Each painting genre moulds itself into a similar format. Efforts have been made that for each genre its origin, necessary background information, theme, methods and materials are covered.*



**सांस्कृतिक स्रोत एवं प्रशिक्षण केन्द्र**  
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